

BEYOND THREE-SCORE AND TEN

*A second report on a survey
of the elderly*

by Mark Abrams

B:3A

AGE CONCERN RESEARCH PUBLICATION

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I INTRODUCTION

THE FIRST findings from this survey were published in March 1978 and dealt with some of the salient characteristics of our sample of men and women aged 75 or more: the very high proportion who were women living alone; the very small proportion who were active members of clubs and similar bodies specifically organised for the elderly; the fact that over one-third of people in this age group had no living offspring; the infrequency of visits from either statutory or voluntary social workers; the feelings of acute loneliness among at least one in five of all these elderly people; the relatively high indications of satisfaction with their lives when tested on some of the widely used formal life-satisfaction scales; the widely held view among them that having good neighbours and good friends was the surest basis for a satisfying life for people like themselves—followed by the frequent admission that they lacked such 'good neighbours and good friends'.

This and much more is set out in the first report which also describes the method used to draw a probability sample of elderly people in the four urban areas where the survey was carried out in the late spring of 1977—Hove, Northampton, Moss Side (Manchester) and Merton (London).

Our sample of 844 respondents aged 75 or more was selected in equal numbers from the four areas. At the same time and in the same way and in the same towns we also interviewed a sample of 802 men and women aged 65 to 74. There were two reasons for this. First, we wished to see how far our 'target' population (i.e. those aged 75 or more and who had for the most part been born in the 19th century and spent the larger part of their lives before the burgeoning of the Welfare State in the late 1940s and early 1950s) differed in circumstances and attitudes from a generation whose members were born in the 20th century. These people had experienced, while still in the prime of life, the full blooming of the Welfare State—full employment, free medical services, paid holidays, substantial increases in real earnings, improved old-age pensions and, at the same time, very different life styles—a television set in almost every home, a car in every other home, the emergence for the first time in British history of an affluent and much lauded youth culture and the broad acceptance of policies for the elderly based on the equation Keep Active—Stay Young.

The second reason for including a sample of the 'young elderly' in our study was to see how far those who would provide the recruits to the 'old elderly' of the 1980s and 1990s were already committed physically and economically to follow in the footsteps of our contemporary 'old elderly'. The findings presented in *A First Report of a Survey of the Elderly* brought out some important differences between the two generations. For example, the young elderly have greater material expectations, and as they age they are less likely to register the high levels of satisfaction with their circumstances than are today's 'old elderly'. At the same time, many of the ailments and physical difficulties that restrict the activities and reduce the well-being of today's population aged 75 or more are already widespread among the young elderly.

In this Second Report on a Survey of the Elderly we deal with those

findings that bear on the way the elderly spend their time, the part played by the family in their lives, and their economic circumstances. In each of these areas we deal primarily with those aged 75 or more but have added as part of our picture of their differences and similarities some comparable data from the survey of those aged 65 to 74.

At the end of this Second Report there is an Appendix which compares some of the characteristics of the Age Concern four-town sample with those of the all-England sample interviewed in 1976 by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Security. It will be seen that in each age group (75 and over, and 65 to 74) the findings of the two surveys are very similar on such characteristics as marital status, dwelling tenure, membership of church organisations and household composition; the one significant difference relates to the proportion of women aged 75 or more who are living alone; the OPCS survey puts this at 48%, while the Age Concern figure is 60%. This may be because different sampling techniques were used: in the OPCS survey, the first stage in drawing the sample was to send a postal questionnaire to 'the occupier' at several thousand addresses asking the occupier to record the sex, age and marital status of all occupants; 17% of the households failed to reply, and it is possible that these failures included a relatively high proportion of very old women living alone. The first stage in drawing the Age Concern sample was to call on every household in randomly selected blocks in each town and enumerate in all these households everyone aged 65 or more. Which, if either, of the two figures is the correct one we shall not be able to decide until the results of the 1981 Census are available. However, both surveys support the conclusion that approximately half of all women aged 75 or more live alone.

The Third Report on a Survey of the Elderly will deal with health and housing and will be published in the latter part of 1980.

II SOME SUMMARY NOTES

SOME OF the survey findings about those aged 75 or more can be summarised here as follows:

A Time

1 In the Spring of 1977 only 4% of all respondents were without a television set, and on the average day almost three hours were taken up watching television.

2 On the average day the average respondent spent another 1.5 hours listening to radio.

3 Only 1.3 hours was taken up by reading of any kind on the average day; for a large minority (24%) this was less reading than they had been doing five years earlier, even though most of these would have liked to do more reading; they were frustrated because of either poor eyesight or inability to get to a library.

4 In time usage one of the biggest changes that had occurred over the years was the amount of time spent during the day 'just resting'. Over half the respondents said that now, as compared with five years earlier, they did more of this; and as many as one in three of the respondents spent three or more hours on this each day.

5 Perhaps the most striking aspect of the time-budget of those aged 75 or more was that on the average day two-thirds did not go out for a walk; and for many of them this was their greatest leisure frustration. The failure almost invariably was caused by physical disability.

6 An analysis of respondents by social class showed that middle class elderly, as compared with working class elderly:

- (a) are much less prone to join clubs for old people;
- (b) spent less time watching television and listening to radio;
- (c) spent more time reading and less time 'just resting';
- (d) went for walks more frequently;
- (e) filled out their leisure time with a wider range of activities.

Despite these differences in leisure behaviour, substantial majorities in both classes feel that the things they are currently doing are just as interesting to them as they ever were.

7 There is no single pattern of time use that describes the leisure of all elderly people; some spent five or six hours each day watching television, while others were content with no more than an hour or two of watching; some rarely went out for a walk, while others went out regularly for an hour or two every day; some had more or less given up reading, but for others two or three hours of reading was part of their average day.

B Family

8 All respondents had outlived both their parents who had on average lived well beyond the biblical three-score years and ten.

9 Less than 70% had any living siblings and many saw these brothers and sisters rarely. Thus, of those aged 75 or more, only one-third ever saw a sibling as often as once a month.

10 Two-thirds of the women were either widowed, divorced or separated; and another 18% had never married.

11 Over one-third had either never had any children or else had outlived them. Among those living alone as many as 45% were childless.

12 However, of those with living offspring nearly three-quarters saw them at least once a week.

13 Less than 60 per cent of respondents had any grandchildren; but almost half these grandparents had either not seen any of their grandchildren during the four weeks before the interview or had seen them only once.

14 Only 27% had any great-grandchildren; and two-thirds of these said that either they had not seen them at all or had seen them only once in the preceding four weeks.

15 Less than 30% of people aged 75 or more had had a visit from any family member during the week-end before the interview.

16 Clearly, it would be erroneous to assume that family life (even if this includes 'intimacy at a distance') is available to all elderly people: a substantial minority (over one-third) had no living offspring; for companionship these old people were entirely dependent on what was provided by friends and neighbours and the occasional contacts with statutory and voluntary social workers.

C Economic conditions

17 For nearly 90% of those in this age group a State pension was their main source of income; a small minority of men (12%) named their private pension as their main source, and an even smaller proportion of women (5%) gave income from investments and savings as their main source of income.

18 A considerable majority (86%) of respondents had a secondary source of income, and among those living alone the proportion in this position was even higher—94%. The two main types of secondary income were interest and dividends from investment (received by 30%) and supplementary benefit (28%).

19 While a majority of respondents said they had no need of any extra income 'in order to live without any money worries and in reasonable comfort', as many as 43% of the elderly said that this state could be attained only if they had more money—usually an extra £4 or £5 weekly. Most usually they felt they needed this for heating, food and clothing; 1 in 14 added that on their present resources they could not make ends meet—a condition far short of 'comfort and without money worries'.

20 While as many as 35% were completely satisfied with their present financial position and another 48% were fairly satisfied (a total of 83%), only three-fifths of the elderly felt that their present sources of income gave them security for the future; those lacking such confidence were found most frequently among those currently living with a spouse or with their children and drawing a secondary income from returns on their savings.

21 Most elderly people lived in households that possessed a television set and a refrigerator, and the extent of their ownership of a house and a telephone was roughly the same as that registered among the general population. They fell behind the rest of the population, however, in their access to some of the labour-saving durables that make life more comfortable—central heating, a washing machine and a car.

D Women in old age

22 Women constituted two-thirds of all those aged 75 or more, and 60% of these women lived alone. A comparison of these two types of elderly women—the 60% who lived alone and the 40% who lived with others (usually a spouse or children) shows that the former tended to have a distinctive life-style: they spent much more time each day on the passive leisure occupations—watching television, listening to radio, reading, and just resting; their week-end outings were usually taken alone; they were less visited at the week-end; they had fewer durable household goods; they were less likely to have had any offspring, and those who had had children were more likely to be living a considerable distance away from them. For some, their lack of family ties and contacts was made good by the proximity of close friends; but judging from the views expressed by them in the various life-satisfaction scales it is clear that feelings of loneliness, uselessness and frustration were twice as common among women who lived alone than among women who lived with others.

III THE USE OF TIME

THE FIRST REPORT (published in March 1978) on the findings of the survey in four English towns carried out in the Spring of 1977 gave an account of some aspects of the leisure time pursuits of elderly people—the visits made to friends and relatives, their membership of and attendance at clubs organised by religious bodies, etc. In this Second Report it is proposed to follow the same form of presentation and to fill out the original account with hitherto unpublished material from the survey.

Those aged 75 or more

Watching television

In the Spring of 1977 of all our respondents aged 75 or more in Hove, Merton, Moss Side and Northampton 30% had a colour television set and 66% a black and white set; only 4% had no television set at all. Access to a colour set was much less common among those living alone (e.g. only 23% of women living alone had a colour set, while for those living with others the proportion was over 41%). However, irrespective of the type of set available, the average elderly person (like the average person in every other age-band of the population—from the age of 5 up to 74) spent a large part of the waking hours watching television. For all the four standard subgroups used in this survey (men living alone, men living with others, women living alone, and women living with others) the average amount of time spent watching each day was close to three hours. (The question asked was 'How much time did you spend watching television yesterday?' and the interviews were spread over all days of the week except Sunday.)

The averages, however, mask some very large differences in behaviour. For example, one in six of the respondents had watched no television at all on the average day preceding the interview, and among those living alone the proportion of complete abstainers was as high as 20%. At the other extreme there were nearly as many who had watched for at least five hours on the average day. This extensive viewing was a little more common among men than among women and was particularly common among men living alone.

The next questions sought to discover the extent of any 'frustrated viewing'. They ran: 'Do you watch more, less, or the same as you did five years ago?' 'Would you like to watch more often?' And if the answer was 'yes', then, 'What mainly keeps you from doing it more often?'

All but 4% of the respondents gave a clear-cut answer to the first of these supplementary questions: nearly half said there had been no change in the amount of time they spent watching television; almost one-third said there had been an increase—presumably many of these would be people who had acquired a set within the previous five years; and only 18% thought there had been a decline in the amount of time they spent watching television. Of the whole sample of those aged 75 or more only 7% said they would like to increase the amount of time they now spent watching; slightly over half of

these few were people without a set, and most of the others were people who said that viewing was restricted by some physical disability—poor eyesight, poor hearing, tiredness, etc.

TABLE 1. WATCHING TELEVISION: 75+

No. of hours yesterday	All 75 or more	Men		Women	
		LA*	NLA*	LA	NLA
	%	%	%	%	%
0	16	24	10	19	14
1	11	13	9	8	17
2	21	10	24	20	21
3	18	13	22	16	18
4	16	14	16	19	13
5 or more	18	26	19	18	17
	100	100	100	100	100
Average hours	2.9	3.0	2.9	2.8	2.8
Compared with 5 years ago:	%	%	%	%	%
Now: More	31	26	30	33	32
Less	18	25	17	16	18
Same	47	46	50	46	46
D.K.**	4	3	3	5	4
	100	100	100	100	100
Would like to watch more	7	6	7	7	9
% with colour TV	30	19	33	23	41
% with black and white TV	66	68	74	66	59

*LA = Lives alone *NLA = Does not live alone
 **DK = Don't know

In considering any global figures for each of the four urban areas it should be borne in mind that: (a) although in all of them women constituted a large majority of the 75 or over population the proportion of women in Hove (72%) and Moss Side (71%) was higher than in Merton (64%) and Northampton (63%); this means that in leisure activities such as 'going for a walk' where women's rate of activity is comparatively low, then the global figures for Hove and Moss Side will tend, other things being equal, to be slightly lower than the global figures for Merton and Northampton. (b) Although in all four urban areas the proportion of elderly people living alone was at least 42%, in Hove (47%) and Moss Side (53%) the figure was higher than in Merton (42%) and Northampton (44%). This will have the effect of slightly raising the global figures for Hove and Moss Side in those activities such as 'radio listening' which took up a relatively large amount of the time of people living alone.

In all four towns practically every elderly person had access to a television set; in all four towns there was the same polarised pattern of viewing

behaviour—25% or more watching for one hour or less, while 30% or more watched for at least four hours every day.

The average amount of viewing was comparatively low in Hove and Northampton and was at its highest in Moss Side where almost one-quarter of respondents watched for a minimum of five hours each day. In all four towns many people were viewing more than they had been five years previously; in none of them was there much evidence of a desire to spend more time watching television.

TABLE 2. WATCHING TELEVISION: 75+ (BY TOWN)

No. of hours yesterday	Hove	Merton	Moss Side	Northampton
	%	%	%	%
0	17	13	16	18
1	8	13	9	14
2	24	18	15	23
3	22	19	15	13
4	14	17	21	16
5 or more	15	20	24	16
	100	100	100	100
Average hours	2.7	2.9	3.2	2.6
Compared with 5 years ago:	%	%	%	%
More	34	28	28	33
Less	17	17	14	21
Same	45	53	56	36
D.K.	4	2	2	10
	100	100	100	100
Would like to watch more	%	%	%	%
	7	6	5	8
% have colour TV	34	29	31	28
% have black and white TV	59	71	63	68
Unweighted N =	220	210	214	200

Listening to radio

In addition to the 2.9 hours spent daily watching television, the average person aged 75 or more occupied almost another 1.5 hours listening to the radio; it was well above this figure for those living alone (1.8 hours) and well below it for those living with others (1.1 hours). Again, as with television viewing, these averages are built on very wide differences in behaviour. On the average day nearly 40% did no listening but 17% had their sets on for at least three hours; indeed, among those living alone slightly over 17% were listening to their radio for four hours or more each day.

A little under two-thirds of the respondents said there had been no change in the extent of their radio listening as compared with five years earlier; small minorities thought they now listened either more (18%) or less (14%). Increased listening was much more commonly reported among those living

alone—one in four of them said they were listening more than they had been five years previously.

Only 5% of people in this age group felt that they would like to increase the amount of time they spent listening to the radio; some of these were people who no longer had a radio set, but the most frequent specific causes offered were 'too busy doing other things' (e.g. reading, watching TV) or 'physical disability' (e.g. hard of hearing). It would seem that radio is not as effective as television as a channel of communication with the older elderly.

TABLE 3. LISTENING TO RADIO: 75+

No. of hours yesterday	All 75 or more	Men		Women	
		LA	NLA	LA	NLA
	%	%	%	%	%
0	38	37	37	33	48
1	30	28	34	26	32
2	15	12	16	18	10
3	5	5	6	6	3
4 or more	12	18	7	17	7
	100	100	100	100	100
Average hours	1.4	1.7	1.2	1.8	1.0
Compared with 5 years ago:	%	%	%	%	%
More	18	24	12	24	11
Less	14	17	14	14	15
Same	63	53	68	57	69
D.K.	5	6	6	5	5
	100	100	100	100	100
Would like to listen more	5	4	3	5	7
Unweighted N =	844	79	168	411	186
Weighted N =	2994	221	766	1193	813

Reading

The average person aged 75 or more spent even less time on reading than on listening to the radio; it worked out at 1.3 hours on the average day. And again this figure embraced wide differences in behaviour. Nearly one-third (31%) of all respondents had spent no time reading on the day before the interview, while at the other extreme, 12% had been occupied for three or more hours in reading. Those least likely to be extensive readers were women living with others, while the more extensive readers were men living alone.

A little over half the respondents said that the amount of time they spent reading had not changed, as compared with five years earlier; but those who had reduced their reading outnumbered those who said it had increased (24% against 20%). The fall-off was much more marked among women than among men, and indeed among men living alone those recording more reading outnumbered those saying they did less reading.

As we have seen, very few people (5% and 7%) regretted their inability to

watch more television or listen to more radio; but with reading the extent of frustration, although still limited to a minority, was significantly higher: one in six said they would like to undertake more reading, but for the most part, they were unable to do so because of physical disability (three-quarters of them)—usually poor eyesight, but occasionally because they were unable to get to a lending library. The ratio of frustrated readers was highest among those living alone.

TABLE 4. READING: 75+

No. of hours yesterday	All 75 or more	Men		Women	
		LA	NLA	LA	NLA
0	% 31	% 28	% 29	% 29	% 36
1	39	31	41	39	40
2	18	30	16	19	15
3 or more	12	11	14	13	9
	100	100	100	100	100
Average hours	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.1
Compared with 5 years ago:	%	%	%	%	%
More	20	24	18	23	16
Less	24	22	19	26	25
Same	52	51	57	47	56
D.K.	4	3	6	4	3
	100	100	100	100	100
Would like more reading	% 17	% 16	% 11	% 21	% 18

Just resting

The average person aged 75 or more spent nearly 2.2 hours a day on 'just resting'—a 'nap after lunch', 'dozed off in the middle of the morning'; at this level it was not far short of the amount of time spent watching television. This average figure was very much the same for men and women and for those living alone and those living with others. On the average day only 25% of respondents had spent no time on 'just resting', but nearly as many had taken rests which lasted at least four hours.

A majority of people (54%) said that compared with five years earlier they were now spending more time resting, and only 2% thought they had lessened their resting time over this period. Women were more likely than men to say that they were spending more of their time just resting.

Since a decision to rest involves nothing more strenuous than a withdrawal of activity it is not surprising that all but 2% of respondents felt that they had struck the right balance between rest and non-rest; if they had wanted more of the former, there was presumably nothing to prevent them doing so.

TABLE 5. JUST RESTING: 75+

No. of hours yesterday	All 75 or more	Men		Women	
		LA	NLA	LA	NLA
	%	%	%	%	%
0	25	21	26	26	23
1	20	17	19	19	22
2	21	21	23	20	20
3	11	12	8	12	12
4	8	9	8	10	5
5 or more	15	20	16	13	18
	100	100	100	100	100
Average hours	2.2	2.5	2.2	2.2	2.4
Compared with 5 years ago:	%	%	%	%	%
More	54	48	47	56	59
Less	2	4	5	2	1
Same	39	44	41	38	36
D.K.	5	4	7	4	4
	100	100	100	100	100
Would like more	% 2	% —	% 4	% 1	% 1

Going out for a walk

Before considering the answers to the questions about going for walks, it is relevant to comment briefly on some findings from other parts of the interview. For example, of all those aged 75 or more, 2% of the men and 3% of the women interviewed were bedfast or chairfast; the incidence of these limitations on mobility was slightly higher among those living with others than it was among those living alone (3% as compared with 2%). Apart from those who said they had 'a little difficulty', another 9% of respondents said either that they had 'quite a bit of difficulty' getting round their house or flat or else that they found it impossible; the incidence of this difficulty was much higher among women than among men, and much higher among those living with others than among those living alone. And finally, nearly half the respondents (49%) said they had difficulty with walking—because of rheumatism, swollen legs, spells of giddiness, etc; for men this proportion was comparatively low (36%) and very high for women (55%); differences between those living alone and those living with others were negligible on this question of 'difficulty with walking'.

In the light of these facts it is hardly surprising that two-thirds of respondents said that on the day before the interview they had spent no time at all going out for a walk and another 25% had limited their walk to an hour or less. For the sample as a whole the average time spent on going for a walk was less than half an hour; for men it was 36 minutes, for women 25 minutes.

There is very little likelihood that the non-pedestrians went out for a car ride to make good their failure to go out for a walk. Only 15% of all those aged

75 or more lived in households that had a car, and among those living alone the proportion was as low as 3%.

Nearly 60% of all women and 45% of all men said that they were doing less walking than they had been doing five years before the interview; less than 10% said they were doing more walking. And it is clear from the answers to the next question that this immobilisation is one of the major frustrations of the elderly. Of all the men in this age group over one-third said they would like to go out for a walk more often, and among women the proportion giving this reply was just over 40%. With very few exceptions this frustration arose from physical disabilities; only 2% of those whose outdoor walking fell short of what they would like to do attributed the failure to the fact that they were too busy—and these were almost all men.

TABLE 6. OUT FOR A WALK; 75+

No. of hours yesterday	All 75 or more	Men		Women	
		LA	NLA	LA	NLA
0	% 66	% 61	% 56	% 67	% 73
1	25	20	33	25	20
2	6	17	5	6	5
3 or more	3	2	6	2	2
	100	100	100	100	100
Average hours	.47	.60	.62	.42	.36
Compared with 5 years ago:	%	%	%	%	%
More	8	12	11	7	4
Less	53	46	43	58	59
Same	31	36	37	28	28
D.K.	8	6	9	7	9
	100	100	100	100	100
Would like more:	% 39	% 24	% 37	% 42	% 40
Why frustrated	%	%	%	%	%
Physical disability	85	81	72	90	88
Too busy	2	7	6	*	—
Other and don't know	13	12	22	10	12
	100	100	100	100	100

* = less than 0.5%

The fact that the average elderly man does 50% more walking than does the average elderly woman would lead one to expect that in the separate findings for the four urban areas, Hove, with its very high proportion of women to men, would be well behind the other three towns in average levels of walking. The opposite is true. In the three inland towns 70% of respondents had not been out for a walk on the day before the interview; but in seaside Hove this proportion was little more than half (53%). Moreover, in Hove the proportion saying they would like to do more walking was higher than anywhere else; like

other frustrated walkers they were mainly restricted by physical disabilities. Presumably, for the old elderly the attractions and opportunities for taking a walk were appreciably greater in Hove than in London and Manchester and, even in Northampton.

TABLE 7. OUT FOR A WALK: 75+ (BY TOWN)

No. of hours yesterday	Hove	Merton	Moss Side	Northampton
	%	%	%	%
0	53	72	69	70
1	33	21	23	23
2	10	5	6	5
3 or more	4	2	2	2
	100	100	100	100
Average hours	.70	.37	.42	.39
Compared with 5 years ago:	%	%	%	%
More	7	9	6	6
Less	52	55	60	50
Same	36	33	32	20
D.K.	5	3	2	24
	100	100	100	100
Would like more:	%	%	%	%
	44	40	32	33
Why frustrated:	%	%	%	%
Physical disability	87	89	82	74
Too busy	1	4	1	—
Other and don't know	12	7	17	26
	100	100	100	100
% with car	%	%	%	%
	16	15	7	20

Knitting and sewing (women only)

All respondents were asked how much time they had spent on the previous day on knitting and sewing. However, since only 1.8% of the men made any claims, we shall report only the answers of the women. On the average day nearly a quarter of them had engaged in these activities. For the most part they had spent an hour or less on them but among both those living alone and those living with others there were small minorities who had spent several hours on their knitting. Indeed, because of their zeal it appears that, on the average day, the average woman aged 75 or more spent more time sewing and knitting than she did going out for a walk. Broadly, 38% of women were doing less knitting and sewing than they had been five years previously, but one in eight were doing more. A sizeable minority (20%) said they would like to be doing more knitting and sewing, but most added that they were unable to because of physical disabilities—poor eyesight, arthritis etc. (When the question was put to men, only 0.1% of them said they would like to do more than they were currently doing.)

TABLE 8. KNITTING AND SEWING: WOMEN

No. of hours yesterday	All 75 or more	LA	NLA
	%	%	%
0	77	76	78
1	11	13	9
2	6	6	6
3 or more	6	5	7
	100	100	100
Average hours	.46	.47	.46
Compared with 5 years ago:	%	%	%
More	12	10	14
Less	38	40	36
Same	40	41	38
D.K.	10	9	12
	100	100	100
Would like more:	%	%	%
	20	22	16
Why frustrated:	%	%	%
Physical disability	84	86	81
Too busy	6	2	14
Other	10	12	5
	100	100	100

TABLE 9. OTHER PASTIMES: 75+

No. of hours yesterday	All 75 or more	Men		Women	
		LA	NLA	LA	NLA
	%	%	%	%	%
0	69	60	60	72	76
1	8	12	8	8	7
2	10	8	15	9	6
3 or more	13	20	17	11	11
	100	100	100	100	100
Average hours	.78	1.20	.98	.74	.67
Compared with 5 years ago:	%	%	%	%	%
More	10	15	16	6	7
Less	14	11	13	14	15
Same	54	52	53	58	49
D.K.	22	22	18	22	29
	100	100	100	100	100
Would like more often: %	9	13	10	8	7

Other pastimes and hobbies

In a final question in this section of the interview respondents were asked to name any other pastimes on which they had spent any time on the preceding day: almost 70% of them could think of nothing they had done which could be so described. The proportion of negative answers was much higher among women than among men (74% against 60%). The time spent by the average respondent on these activities was a little over three-quarters of an hour, and men and women living alone spent more time on them than did their counterparts who were living with others. Men participants in these 'yesterday's other pastimes' (e.g. playing cards, completing football pool coupons) were more likely than women to say that they were spending more time on them than they had been five years previously, but few people of either sex thought they would like to give more time to these activities.

An amalgamation of the averages in the preceding tables gives the following account of how the average person aged 75 or more spent the average day.

TABLE 10. TIME SPENT 'YESTERDAY': 75+

Hours on:	All 75 or more	Men		Women	
		LA	NLA	LA	NLA
Watching TV	2.9	3.0	2.9	2.8	2.8
Listening to radio	1.4	1.7	1.2	1.8	1.0
Reading	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.1
Resting	2.2	2.5	2.2	2.2	2.4
Going for a walk	.5	.6	.6	.4	.4
Other pastimes	.8	1.2	1.0	.7	.7
Total	9.1	10.4	9.2	9.2	8.4

On the assumption that the average elderly person has 15 hours out of bed each day, then the behaviour described above would absorb 60% of the non-bed hours and leave another six hours for getting up, washing, dressing, some cooking, taking meals, doing some housework and shopping, receiving visitors and preparing for bed. And 5.4% of the men and 2.1% of the women spent part of the day on part-time jobs that brought in earnings.

The broad pattern of behaviour was much the same in all four urban areas—the biggest slice of time (among those dealt with) was taken up by 'watching television' and the smallest slice by 'going for a walk'. There were, however, some clear differences between them in the time spent on particular activities. For example, the elderly in Manchester's Moss Side exceeded the others in the amount of time spent watching television and the elderly in Hove, compared with their age-peers in the other three towns, spent much less time on 'just resting' and more on going for a walk.

The total time spent on the six listed activities was lowest in Northampton, and this, as emerges later, was in part due to the fact that, compared with elderly people in the other three towns, they had more gregarious lives—saw a little more of their friends and relations and were more prone to be members of organised groups.

TABLE 11. AVERAGE TIME SPENT 'YESTERDAY': 75+ (BY TOWN)

Hours on:	Hove	Merton	Moss Side	Northampton
Watching TV	2.7	2.9	3.2	2.6
Listening to radio	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.2
Reading	1.4	1.0	1.5	1.1
Resting	1.8	2.3	2.7	2.4
Going for a walk	.7	.4	.4	.4
Other pastimes	.9	.9	.5	.7
Total	9.0	8.9	9.8	8.4

Those aged 65 to 74

It will be remembered that, although our main interest in this survey has been the needs, behaviour and adjustment of people aged 75 or more, it was decided to include a sample of those aged 65 to 74 in the four survey towns in part to ascertain how far, if at all, the young elderly differed from the old elderly, and, in part, to see how far one might anticipate the needs, behaviour and adjustment of tomorrow's older elderly people. In this section of the report, therefore, we shall present details about the 65 to 74 age group only on those forms of 75-and-over behaviour that might be thought to be distinctive of them—long stretches of the day used for 'just resting' and very little for exercise in the form of 'going for a walk'.

Just resting

In this age group the average person spent less time each day just resting (1.6 hours as compared with 2.2 hours by his elders); but this was very largely because the women, unlike the men, appeared to use comparatively little time in this form of relaxation. Thus, while 17.4% of the men spent four or more hours resting on the average day, the proportion of women with such a score was only 9.2. As they pass from one age-band to another there is very little change in the amount of time that men devote to day-time resting; women on the other hand add an extra hour to their day's resting. This would seem to be largely because in old age the proportion who are widows and are living alone increases substantially, and in this situation they do not have a spouse to take care of. And in part it would seem (from the data collected on illnesses and handicaps) that with advancing years women add to their physical disabilities to a greater extent than do men.

When asked to compare their present amounts of resting with what they had been doing five years earlier, half the respondents said they were now spending more time this way; among men the proportion was above this level (54%), but among women it was a little below (48%).

The men, almost without exception felt completely satisfied with the amount of time they spent resting; but among the women living with others there were a few (one in 25 of them) who said they would like more time for a rest during the day. Presumably this is something they achieve as they grow

older: as many as 57% of the women aged 75 or more reported that compared with five years earlier they were now doing more resting.

The average amount of time spent each day on resting was appreciably less in Hove (1.3 hours) than in either Moss Side or Northampton; in part this resulted from the higher proportion of women in the Hove population.

TABLE 12. JUST RESTING: 65-74

No. of hours yesterday	All 65-74	Men		Women	
		LA	NLA	LA	NLA
	%	%	%	%	%
0	37	34	31	41	40
1	22	13	23	23	21
2	20	17	22	19	19
3	9	10	8	8	10
4	5	13	6	5	5
5 or more	7	13	10	4	5
	100	100	100	100	100
Average hours	1.6	2.0	1.9	1.3	1.4
Compared with 5 years ago:	%	%	%	%	%
More	50	56	53	49	47
Less	4	4	4	4	3
Same	42	37	39	42	48
D.K.	4	3	4	5	2
	100	100	100	100	100
Would like more:	%	%	%	%	%
	2	—	1	*	4
Unweighted N =	802	64	251	260	227
Weighted N =	4,885	246	1,706	1,154	1,178

* = less than 0.5%

Going out for a walk

Going out for a walk was an activity almost as rare among the younger elderly as it was among the older elderly; on the average day 60% of the former as compared with 66% of the latter stayed at home. The outcome of time spent in going out for a walk, in terms of the average for each age group, was 33 minutes each day for those 65 to 74 years of age, and 28 minutes each day for those aged 75 or more.

The whole of the extra average time for the younger group came from the difference in the behaviour of those living alone. Among the younger respondents both men and women living alone were much more likely than those living with others to go out for a walk; but with old age this difference more or less disappeared and their walk outings pattern approximated very closely to that of those living with others.

Approximately one-third of the younger elderly said that compared with five years previously they now went out for walks less frequently; one-quarter of this age-group said they would like to take walks more frequently than they

did. They attributed their frustration overwhelmingly to physical disabilities, but minorities gave reasons that were very rarely mentioned by their elders: 11% said they were too busy—they tended to be mainly men living alone or women living with a spouse—and 9% of those living alone gave as the reason for their unwanted inactivity the fact that they had no one to go with on a walk.

TABLE 13. OUT FOR A WALK: 65-74

No. of hours yesterday	All 65-74	Men		Women	
		LA	NLA	LA	NLA
0	% 60	% 42	% 58	% 51	% 72
1	28	39	28	35	22
2	9	14	11	10	5
3 or more	3	5	3	4	1
	100	100	100	100	100
Average hours	.55	.83	.62	.68	.36
Compared with 5 years ago:	%	%	%	%	%
More	16	11	21	17	12
Less	34	37	28	35	41
Same	42	47	42	39	42
D.K.	8	5	9	9	5
	100	100	100	100	100
Would like more:	% 25	% 24	% 22	% 25	% 29
Why frustrated:	%	%	%	%	%
Physical disability	67	55	67	80	62
Too busy	11	20	10	2	16
No one to go with	3	7	—	10	—
Other and don't know	19	18	23	8	22
	100	100	100	100	100

Average patterns

If we consider the totals of average times spent on all six listed activities, there is a range of 10 hours for men living alone to only eight hours for women living with others; the former achieved their high total largely because of the extra time taken up by listening to the radio, resting or walking.

The leisure pattern that emerged for the 65 to 74 age group as a whole was very much the same as that of their elders; the only significant difference was that the latter spent more time each day on 'just resting', and this increase was more marked among women than among men; compared with younger women, the older women added an hour to their resting periods and by so doing they almost equalled the amount of time spent by the older elderly men on the use of leisure time. And small minorities in this younger age group

spent part of their day at work—14.9% of the men and 10.4% of the women; 70% of them had part-time jobs.

The average time patterns in the four towns were very much alike. The differences between the highest figure (9.4 hours in Moss Side) and the lowest (Hove 8.6 hours) sprang largely from the additional time spent in Moss Side on watching television and on 'just resting'.

TABLE 14. TIME SPENT 'YESTERDAY': 65-74

Average hours on:	All 65-74	Men		Women	
		LA	NLA	LA	NLA
Watching TV	2.9	3.0	3.3	2.8	2.7
Listening to radio	1.6	2.1	1.3	2.0	1.6
Reading	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.0
Resting	1.6	2.0	1.9	1.3	1.4
Going for a walk	.6	.8	.6	.7	.4
Other pastimes	1.0	.8	1.3	1.0	.9
Total	8.9	10.0	9.7	9.0	8.0

TABLE 15. AVERAGE TIME SPENT 'YESTERDAY': 65-74 (BY TOWN)

Hours on:	Hove	Merton	Moss Side	Northampton
Watching TV	2.8	2.8	3.2	3.0
Listening to radio	1.6	2.0	1.5	1.5
Reading	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.0
Resting	1.3	1.4	1.8	2.0
Going for a walk	.7	.5	.6	.5
Other pastimes	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.0
Total	8.6	9.1	9.4	9.0
Unweighted N =	206	194	201	201

Social class and the use of time

Given their differences in educational background, occupational background, occupational histories, material resources in retirement years and comparative familiarity with leadership roles in community affairs, one would expect that in old age there would be marked differences in the way middle class and working class people spend their leisure time. Small scale studies carried out by American gerontologists have supported this expectation. Thus, Havighurst¹ in his study of a sample of retired teachers and steelworkers found, for example, that the former were much more prone than the latter to be involved in clubs, church and civic-political activities. Similarly, the findings of Alan Macbeath's Deeside survey suggests that elderly middle class women spent twice as much time as elderly working class women in informal social contacts.²

1. Robert Havighurst 'Ageing in Western Society', in 'The Social Challenge of Ageing'. ed. David Hobman, Croom Helm, London 1978.

2. Paper 6 in 'Leisure and the Quality of Life', HMSO, London 1977.

In our survey the total sample of respondents was large enough to sustain the subdivision of each age group (75 or more, and 65 to 74) into four socio-economic groups—AB (professional and managerial), C1 (other white-collar workers), C2 (skilled manual workers), DE (other manual workers). These occupational descriptions related to the respondent's economic activity before reaching pensionable age or her husband's; this latter procedure was frequently necessary among respondents aged 75 or more, since well over two-thirds of them were women and almost two-thirds of these women were widows.

Those aged 75 or more

Before examining the leisure activities of the four social classes described above it was necessary to establish whether or not there were any significant differences between them in household structure and in sex composition since, as we have seen earlier, in some leisure activities (e.g. going for a walk), these circumstances materially affect behaviour; for example, those living alone tend to spend more time listening to radio than do those living with others; and men spend more time going for walks than do women.

However, the results of this preliminary examination (shown in Table 16) indicate that in these terms class differences were small or even negligible. The only marked deviation occurred among DE respondents (unskilled and semi-skilled manual workers) where women outnumber men by more than three to one (presumably a reflection of the higher mortality rates among men in this class), whereas in the other social grades the ratio of women to men is around the two to one level. And again in the DE grade there was a greater propensity for respondents to be living alone (54% of them as against an average of 44% for the other three social classes.) This characteristic of the poorer working class elderly—that as a group they are more likely than others to consist of women and of people living alone—should be kept in mind in considering the findings on class differences in leisure behaviour.

TABLE 16. CLASS COMPOSITION BY SEX AND HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

Age 75 or more		AB	C1	C2	DE	All
		%	%	%	%	%
Men:	LA	6	5	10	7	7
	NLA	32	27	29	17	26
Women:	LA	40	42	33	47	40
	NLA	22	26	28	29	27
Total		100	100	100	100	100
N=		82	180	128	454	844
Weighted base		170	248	363	219	1000

Membership of clubs for the elderly

As we have seen earlier, comparatively few of those aged 75 or more (only 13%) were members of a club organised specifically for old people; among

those in the AB grade the proportion was even lower at 7%; it was highest in the DE grade (15%), and indeed, people from the two working class groups constituted a solid majority (62%) of all club members, while those with an AB background provided only 13% of all members.

And in terms of *active* membership the picture was even more unbalanced: of the handful of AB members, nearly 70% attended the club less than once a month; of the working class members well over 80% turned up at least once a week.

TABLE 17. LEISURE ACTIVITIES BY CLASS: CLUBS FOR THE ELDERLY

Aged 75 or more	AB	C1	C2	DE	All
	%	%	%	%	%
% who belong	7	10	13	15	13
Of those who belong:					
Age of joining: Under 65	—	7	2	21	14
65–74	81	75	75	50	60
75 or later	19	18	23	29	26
	100	100	100	100	100
	%	%	%	%	%
Attend: Once a week or more	16	76	82	85	79
Once a fortnight	—	5	—	5	4
Once a month	16	—	7	—	2
Less	68	19	11	10	15
	100	100	100	100	100

Membership of church-based groups and clubs

Here the differences in class-related membership rates were negligible. In all four it was close to the overall average of 13%. There were, however, two striking class differences in the nature of this membership. For two thirds of AB members the association with church groups dated from childhood, adolescence and early adulthood; for DE members, on the other hand, the association had come late in life, and indeed, nearly half the DE members had joined after passing their sixtieth birthday. The second difference is in 'activity rates'; slightly less than half (49%) of AB members attended a meeting at least once a fortnight, but for the DE members the corresponding figure was nearly two-thirds. In other words, although, compared with AB's, religion-organised gregariousness comes late in life to DE's, yet it provides them with more social intercourse.

Watching television

Watching television would seem to be a leisure activity that largely overrides class barriers; there may be differences in the programmes they watch but in all four social grades at least 70% of elderly people watched for at least two

TABLE 18. LEISURE ACTIVITIES BY CLASS: CHURCH ETC. GROUPS

Age 75 or more	AB	C1	C2	DE	All
% who belong	13	16	10	14	13
Of those who belong:					
Age of joining:					
Under 21	29	19	29	16	20
21-40	36	20	18	21	22
41-60	28	23	18	19	21
61-74	7	25	27	31	26
75 or later	—	13	8	13	11
	100	100	100	100	100
Attend: Once a week or more	49	59	49	56	55
Once a fortnight	—	18	12	6	9
Once a month	32	15	24	11	16
Less	19	8	15	27	20
	100	100	100	100	100

hours every day. The only significant difference is that in the AB group the 'tail' of heavy viewers (those who viewed for at least five hours a day) constituted no more than 7% of the total), while in the other three groups the proportion of heavy viewers was round the 20% mark. In each of the four groups, however, there was the same polarity of behaviour: a minority spending very little time on watching television and another minority for whom this occupied a very large proportion of their waking hours.

Listening to radio

In all four social classes a substantial minority (around 40%) spent no time at all on the average day listening to radio. However, beyond this basic class similarity there was a repetition of the bias already described in the television findings: putting aside the complete non-listeners and dividing the remainder into 'light listeners' (one or two hours) and 'heavy listeners', we find that among the AB's light listeners outnumbered heavy listeners by five to one, whereas among the DE's this ratio was less than two to one.

Reading

Apparently much of the time 'saved' by AB's through limiting their television viewing was absorbed by spending more time on reading. No social group gave as much as two hours each day to reading, but the average for the AB's (1.8 hours) was 50% more than that spent by any of the other three groups. The difference sprang largely from the fact that while almost every AB (87%) gave some time to reading on the average day, among each of the other three classes approximately one-third did no reading at all. And while nearly one-

quarter (23%) of all AB's were 'heavy' readers (at least three hours a day), in each of the other three social grades the proportion of 'heavy' readers was half or less of this figure.

'Just resting'

The AB's spent comparatively little time on 'just resting' (1.4 hours a day as compared with 2.3 hours by others); only 4% of them gave (or needed) as much as five hours or more for this each day; this percentage was almost negligible when compared with the 15% or more in each of the other three social groups who gave this amount of time in the average day to 'just resting'. The comparatively high 'busyness' of the AB's is underlined by the fact that over 60% of them gave one hour or less on the average day to resting, while in each of the other three social groups the proportion of non-resters is barely more than 40%. To refrain from 'just resting' would seem to be a distinctive trait of the middle class elderly.

Going out for a walk

In all four social grades a large majority (60% or more) of those aged 75 or more did not go out for a walk on the average day. It was a leisure activity most commonly found among AB's, but even among them only one in six were out walking for two hours or more on the average day; among the two working class groups the comparable ratio was no more than one in eleven. The time out walking for the four groups worked out at roughly 45 minutes for the average AB, 25 minutes for the average C1 and C2, and 30 minutes for the average DE elderly person. (It will be remembered—Table 7—that those most prone to take walks were the elderly residents of Hove—a seaside town which has an above-average proportion of middle-class residents among its elderly population and also a town where 'taking a walk' is likely to be more satisfying than in either metropolitan Merton or metropolitan Moss Side).

Sewing, knitting (women only)

On the average day this was an activity pursued by very few elderly women in all four social classes; the proportion of non-sewers and knitters ranged from 68% among the C2's to 85% among the AB's. However, in each of the three non-AB groups there was a sizeable minority of women (about 15%) who spent at least two hours on the average day on these activities.

Other pastimes

Apart from the leisure activities considered above and apart from visits to and from friends and relations, little time was spent on other leisure activities and hobbies. In all four classes a majority (ranging from 54% of AB's to 74% of DE's) were, on the average day, without any such 'other pastimes'. But, at the

same time each of the four included a minority of approximately 15% who spent at least three hours in the average day on gardening, playing cards, attending clubs and meetings not limited to the elderly, etc.

The findings on time-use by the elderly that have been considered so far can be summarised as in Table 19. The average DE elderly person spent nearly one hour more each day on the time-uses dealt with in this question than did the average AB elderly person—9.4 hours as against 8.6 hours. However, the excess is not spread evenly over all six items; on three of them—watching television, listening to radio, and just resting—the average working class elderly person spent nearly seven hours on the average day and these activities took up three-quarters of their total leisure hours. This was two hours more than the allocation of the average elderly AB person to these activities which accounted for only 57% of their leisure time.

TABLE 19. USE OF TIME FOR LEISURE: AVERAGE DAY BY SOCIAL CLASS (AGE 75 OR MORE)

	AB		C1		C2		DE	
	Hours	%	Hours	%	Hours	%	Hours	%
Watch television	2.4	28	2.8	32	2.9	34	2.9	31
Listen radio	1.1	13	1.4	15	1.1	13	1.7	18
Read	1.8	21	1.2	13	1.0	12	1.2	13
Resting	1.4	16	2.4	26	2.3	26	2.3	25
Out for walk	0.7	8	0.4	4	0.4	5	0.5	5
Other pastimes	1.2	14	0.9	10	0.9	10	0.8	8
Total	8.6	100	9.1	100	8.6	100	9.4	100

On the remaining three pastimes—reading, going for a walk, and ‘other pastimes’—the class balance was reversed; they took up 43% of the average AB person’s leisure time but only 26% of the time of the average DE person on the average day. The replies to the questions asking respondents if they were now doing more or less of each of these activities as compared with five years earlier indicate that the 1977 class differences in leisure behaviour reflect differences that go back to the early years of retirement—and possibly longer.

Weekend visiting

For most middle-aged and young people the weekend is the time set aside for non-work activities of a social nature outside the home—visiting friends, going to a pub or theatre, getting out for a walk, etc. For many elderly people, however, there is no such division of the week into five work-days and two weekend days; all seven are much the same in that nearly half of them simply do not go outside their home at the weekend. This continuity of the days was common to all four social classes but was least marked among middle class AB elderly people. In answer to a question asking about any outdoor trips made on the Saturday and Sunday before the interview, nearly two-thirds of AB’s had made at least one outdoor trip and over 40% had made two or more; of the DE’s little more than one half had been out, and only 23% had made two or more trips.

Apart from this initial difference in behaviour, however, the pattern of trips made by the four social grades tended to be very similar; in each of them approximately 30% of the weekend outings were for shopping or to collect pensions and not far behind came visits to friends and relations, and then, usually in third place, church attendances. The only deviant pattern was that of lower middle class people (C1); they were less prone than others to spend part of the weekend visiting friends and relations, and a larger proportion of their trips took the form of church attendances.

TABLE 20 (a). TRIPS OUT LAST SATURDAY AND SUNDAY (AGE 75 OR MORE)

	AB	C1	C2	DE
	%	%	%	%
None	37	47	44	44
1 trip	21	23	36	33
2 trips	32	23	17	18
3 or more	10	7	3	5
	<hr/> 100	<hr/> 100	<hr/> 100	<hr/> 100
Average no. of trips	1.2	0.9	0.8	0.8

TABLE 20 (b). PURPOSE OF TRIPS

	AB	C1	C2	DE
	%	%	%	%
Shopping, collect pension	29	26	30	30
Visit friends, relations	25	15	21	28
Church etc.	11	23	9	13
Walk	10	16	8	10
Commercial place of relaxation	6	6	10	7
Open-air public place	5	4	8	1
Non-commercial place of relaxation	4	2	2	4
Indoor public place	1	*	—	*
Other	9	8	12	7
	<hr/> 100	<hr/> 100	<hr/> 100	<hr/> 100

The overall picture then of the life styles of very elderly people from different social classes was that in both indoor and outdoor behaviour those from a professional background or managerial background lead more active lives than did those with a manual working class background.

Life satisfaction

There is, however, no evidence from the survey that as a result middle class old people found their lives more satisfying than did working class old people. The replies to the various statements contained in the Life Satisfaction Index showed broadly similar feelings for all four groups about their circumstances.

For example, in commenting on the statement 'Things I do now are as interesting to me as they ever were' agreement was expressed by 68% of AB's, 63% of C1's, 70% of C2's and 65% of DE's.

Nevertheless, despite this high level of classless satisfaction with their current mode of life the same index revealed a significant class difference when the members of each group came to assess the circumstances that preceded 'life now'. In dealing with the statement 'When I think back over my life, I didn't get most of the important things I wanted', only 35% of AB and C1's expressed agreement; for both working class groups agreement came from over 50%. In short, working class elderly people are more prone than middle class elderly people to look back on a life of frustrated aspirations and disappointed expectations.

Those aged 65-74

In terms of sex composition and household composition, the similarities between the four social classes were even greater than among the older group of respondents. Thus, of the AB's, 40% were men and this included a handful (4% of all AB respondents) who were men living alone; in the DE grade 37% were men and this figure included 6% of DE men living alone. Among the women the similarities were even greater: the sample included 36% of AB women living alone and 35% of DE women living alone. The full details are given in Table 21 and they show that any differences in these two characteristics—sex composition and household composition—can be ignored when considering any class differences in leisure activities.

TABLE 21. CLASS COMPOSITION BY SEX AND HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION (65-74)

	AB	C1	C2	DE	All
	%	%	%	%	%
Men: LA	4	5	5	6	5
NLA	36	35	38	31	35
Women: LA	24	23	20	28	24
NLA	36	37	37	35	36
Total	100	100	100	100	100
N=	84	168	155	395	802
Weighted base	116	228	208	448	1000

Membership of clubs for the elderly

Membership of these clubs is small among all groups in the age-band 65 to 74, but it is practically unknown among AB's; and even among those most frequently enrolled (the DE's), only one person in eight is a member. The outcome of this class difference was that while AB's constituted 12% of all those aged 65 to 74 they provided only 2% of all those in this age group who belong to a club organised specifically for old people. But even this low figure

exaggerates the active participation of middle class people in these clubs. In our sample the AB members usually attended only once a month; but nearly 90% of the DE members turned up at least once a week.

TABLE 22. CLUBS FOR THE ELDERLY (65-74)

	AB	C1	C2	DE
	%	%	%	%
% who belong	2	7	8	12
Age of joining: Under 69	100	72	78	69
70-74	-	28	22	31
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>
	%	%	%	%
Attend: Once a week or more	-	45	62	87
Once a fortnight or less	100	55	38	13
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

Membership of church-based groups

Here too, rates of membership were low in all four social classes but tended to be higher among AB's than in either of the working class groups (18% as compared with 9% C2's and 11% DE's). However, those AB's who were members were much more likely to have joined late in life (three-quarters had joined after passing their fortieth birthday) and the majority of them rarely attended any meetings. Working class members, by contrast, tended to be people whose membership went back to adolescence and early adulthood, and a majority of them attended meetings at least once a week. In other words, compared with those in the 75 or more age-band, the 'secularisation' of the young elderly middle class is greater than that of the working class.

TABLE 23. MEMBERSHIP OF CHURCH ETC. ORGANISATIONS (65-74)

	AB	C1	C2	DE
	%	%	%	%
% who belong	18	12	9	11
Age of joining: Under 21	16	32	34	20
21-40	9	30	19	23
41-60	38	19	16	9
61-74	37	19	31	48
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>
	%	%	%	%
Attend: Once a week or more	31	60	71	54
Once a fortnight	13	5	5	13
Once a month	4	17	5	14
Less	52	18	19	19
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

Other leisure activities

In this younger generation of elderly people, class differences in the use of leisure time are negligible or small. Compared with their working class contemporaries, the middle class person spent almost the same amount of time listening to the radio and going for a walk, a little less time on watching television and 'just resting' and a little more time on reading and on the miscellaneous pastimes; and, as with the older generation, on the average day the middle class woman, compared with the working class woman, spent much less time on sewing and knitting—25 minutes as compared with 40 minutes. In all four social classes the leisure time 'saved' by the younger elderly by reducing the amount of time spent on 'just resting' was absorbed largely by watching more television and listening to more radio; none of it was utilised for taking more walks.

TABLE 24. USE OF TIME FOR LEISURE: AVERAGE DAY (65-74 GROUP)

	AB		C1		C2		DE	
	Hours	%	Hours	%	Hours	%	Hours	%
Watch television	2.7	30	2.5	30	3.3	36	3.1	33
Listen radio	1.7	20	1.9	22	1.4	15	1.7	20
Read	1.4	15	1.2	14	1.2	13	1.1	12
Resting	1.3	14	1.5	17	1.7	19	1.6	18
Out for walk	0.5	5	0.4	5	0.4	4	0.7	7
Other pastimes	1.5	16	1.1	12	1.2	13	0.9	10
	9.1	100	8.6	100	9.2	100	9.1	100

Weekend trips

Among the 65 to 74 group there was again an absence of any sharp class differences in the average number of outdoor trips made during the weekend before the interview. This similarity of averages is, however, a little misleading since this younger working class generation had already begun to polarise into the 36% who made no trips and the 31% who managed two or more trips; it is the activity of this latter minority which brings the overall working class number of trips almost up to the level recorded by middle class respondents.

TABLE 25 (a). TRIPS OUT LAST SATURDAY AND SUNDAY (65-74 GROUP)

	AB	C1	C2	DE
	%	%	%	%
None	29	24	36	36
1 trip	29	32	30	33
2 trips	33	33	27	25
3 or more	9	11	7	6
	100	100	100	100
Average no. of trips	1.2	1.3	1.1	1.0

The relative allocation of the trips that were made at the weekend was much the same for all four social classes; for example, in all four approximately one-quarter of the outings were made in order to visit friends

and relations, and in all except the AB group another 30% were for shopping and/or to collect pensions (in the AB grade the figure was only 18% since they were less prone to concentrate their shopping on Saturday and because for some the postman brought their pensions in the form of a monthly cheque). The major class deviation from the general pattern was the relatively large proportion of AB's (15%) who made trips designated as 'other' in Table 25 (b); these ranged from 'drive into the country' to 'to change books at library'.

TABLE 25 (b). PURPOSE OF TRIPS (65-74 GROUP)

	AB	C1	C2	DE
	%	%	%	%
Visit friends, relations	24	26	31	23
Shopping, collect pension	18	29	31	31
Visit commercial place of relaxation	11	9	11	10
Church etc.	10	12	9	11
Non-commercial place of relaxation	8	5	2	3
Walk	8	8	8	10
Open-air public place	6	2	2	4
Indoor public place	—	1	—	*
Other	15	8	6	8
	100	100	100	100

The findings from the two age groups (65 to 74, and 75 or more) suggest that among the elderly with increasing age there is a widening of class differences in the use of leisure time. Whether this is so or not cannot be established in the absence of a longitudinal study of ageing. The present findings may be merely the reflection of the habits acquired by two different generations—an older generation where class differences in leisure pursuits were very marked and a younger generation where these class differences were less sharp. On the other hand, the findings may result from the fact that younger working class men and women who pursue middle class 'busy' life-styles on retirement are less likely to survive into their late seventies and eighties than are their more passive and leisured class peers.

IV THE FAMILY IN OLD AGE

FOR MANY years now it has been governmental policy to restrict publicly provided residential care for the elderly and to emphasise the part to be played by community and domiciliary support; and in this policy it is implied that the family can and will play an important part. In this shift in emphasis the policy-makers have been encouraged by most social gerontologists who have insisted on the persisting ubiquity and strength of the bonds between the elderly and their kin. For example, Peter Townsend rounded off his study of the elderly with the statement that 'The general conclusion of this book is that if the problems of ageing are to be understood, old people must be studied as members of families . . .; and, if this is true, those concerned with social and health administration must, at every stage, treat old people as an inseparable part of a family group. . . . They are not simply individuals. . . . They are members of families and whether or not they are treated as such largely determines their security, their health, and their happiness'.¹

More recently, Professor Ethel Shanas in a paper delivered to an international conference of gerontologists concluded that 'One of the major findings of social research in ageing in all western countries has been the rediscovery of the important role of the family in old age. Research evidence indicates that family help and exchange of services are widespread between both old people and their children and relatives. . . . The continued reports of the family as a major caretaker for the sick elderly . . . reflect not only the inherent strength of the family as a primary support group, but also the fact that family members are available who can fill the role of unpaid nurses and home helpers'.²

The findings of the present survey indicate that for a large minority of the elderly in this country family members are certainly not available and that even where they are available the family bonds are sometimes so fragile as to be almost non-existent. Almost all today's old people, not surprisingly, have outlived their parents; many of them, although they come from large families, no longer have any living brothers and sisters as a result of the high mortality rates among young children and adolescents in the pre-1940 years; and many of today's elderly for various reasons, willingly or unwillingly, have had no children of their own; some of those who have had offspring have seen them emigrate in the early post World War II years. Moreover, the great burst of house-building in Britain over the past thirty years has led to greater geographical separation between parents and offspring and therefore 'intimacy at a distance' has tended to replace everyday face-to-face contact between elderly parents and their children. Between 1961 and 1976 the total number of households in England and Wales increased by 12%, but the number of households that consisted of one person of pensionable age living alone rose by 93% so that today such households constitute 16% of all households.

1. Peter Townsend: *The Family Life of Old People*. Routledge and Kegan Paul 1957

2. Ethel Shanas: *The Elderly: Family, Bureaucracy and Family Help Patterns*. Paper presented Vichy, France, May 1977

Those aged 75 or more

Their parents

We found, not surprisingly, that all men and women in this age-group were orphans. Only 7% of respondents were unable to give a precise age at which their father had died and the median age at death of the remainder was 72—and this figure includes the four per cent of fathers who had died before reaching the age of 40 because of accidents and war wounds. This median figure of 72 was almost identical for all four groups of very elderly respondents—men living alone, men living with others, women living alone and women living with others. And in each of these four groups at least 24% of the fathers had died aged 80 or more; in other words, their actual life-span had been almost double that of their actuarial life-expectation at birth. (In 1871 life-expectation at birth for a male was 40.4 years.)

The pattern of replies to the question asking about father's cause of death was again very similar over all four groups of respondents and inevitably included a large minority who either said that they did not know the cause (17%) or else attributed it to 'old age' (13%). The latter was sometimes used as a synonym for severe dementia. The three most frequently mentioned specific causes were 'heart diseases' (16%), respiratory diseases (15%) and cancers (15%).

The mothers of our respondents had lived on average even longer. Their median age at death was 75, and again this figure would have been higher but for the 3% of mothers who had died of accidents or war wounds before reaching the age of 40. These premature deaths were, however, more than offset by the 34% of all mothers who survived into their 80's and 90's. And again, these high figures of longevity were common to the mothers of both men and women and to those who lived alone and those who lived with others.

The most common cause of death was said to be 'old age' (22%), and another 13% of respondents said they did not know the cause of death. The same three main specific causes of death were given for mothers as for fathers: 16% respiratory diseases, 13% cancers and 12% 'heart diseases'.

Thus, the family history of our sample of today's men and women aged 75 or more starts with mothers and fathers who had also, on average, lived well beyond the biblical three-score and ten years.

Their brothers and sisters

Judged by late 19th century standards most of those aged 75 or more were members of smallish families; the average respondent had had between four and five brothers and sisters; indeed, nearly 60% had had four or less and the average of 4.4 was made possible largely by the presence of 10% of respondents who had had nine or ten siblings.

However, by the time the 1977 survey was carried out, slightly over one-quarter of the respondents had outlived all their brothers and sisters; and since 5% had never had any, this meant that only 69% now had any who

were living. The average age of those who had died was 57, and almost half had died after reaching their sixty-fifth birthday. Apparently longevity is a family trait. These antecedents were common to both men and women in the sample and to both those living alone and those living with others.

The 69% of respondents who had siblings still alive were asked how often they saw any of them. The replies indicate that among the elderly face-to-face contact between brothers and sisters was often comparatively rare; nearly one-half said these occurred once a year or even less frequently, and a further 8% said they could not remember when they had last seen any of their brothers and sisters. Since 31% of respondents had no living siblings and 50% of those who had them rarely saw them, then it would appear that only one-third of the total age-group of 75 or more had anything like frequent (i.e. at least once a month) face-to-face contact with kin with whom they shared parents and with whom they had grown up. For the great majority of elderly people of this age-group family contact of this nature must be determined by the possibility of contact with their own offspring.

Their marital status

At the time of the survey two-thirds of the men in this age group were married and only one-third were either widowed (28%) or had never married. The condition of the women was very different; almost two-thirds (64%) were either widows, divorced, or separated, 18% had never married and only 18% of the women were married. In this age-band women outnumbered men by more than two to one, and the condition of the whole group was that slightly over half (51%) were widowed, one-third were married (34%), and one in eight (13%) had never married; the very small balance of 2% was made up of the very few people in this age group who had remained divorced or separated from a spouse. In considering the discussion in this section of the report, it should be remembered that we are dealing with a population where two-thirds were without the family support that could be provided by a spouse.

Their children

As we have seen (in the First Report on this survey) 30% of all those aged 75 or more had never had any children; and among those living alone 38% had been childless. Another 5% of respondents had outlived all their children; among elderly people living alone the comparable figure was 7% so that in this probably more-vulnerable half of the very elderly, as many as 45%, were childless.

Of those respondents who had living offspring nearly three-quarters (73%) saw them at least once a week (this included the 17% who lived with their children); but at the other end of the spectrum nearly one-quarter of all elderly parents saw any of their children at most once a month. Nearly all of these said they would like to see them more frequently but that this was not possible because they lived too far away.

Their grandchildren

The 70% of respondents who had ever had any children were asked how many grandchildren they had (it is often said that elderly people draw especial comfort and pleasure from the companionship of their grandchildren). We found that one in eight had no such kin and the majority of them (60%) had between one and five. Indeed, if the total incidence of grandchildren is related to the whole of the original sample of all men and women aged 75 or more, the ratio works out at approximately three grandchildren per elderly person.

But even those with grandchildren (57% of all elderly people) did not see a great deal of them. Slightly over one-quarter had not seen any of them during the four weeks before the interview, and another 20% had seen *any* of them just once. Slightly over half of all grandparents said they would like to see more of their grandchildren, but most of these (69%) said this was not possible because the grandchildren lived too far away.

Their great-grandchildren

Contact between respondents and great-grandchildren was even rarer. Only 27% of respondents had such kin, and two-thirds of these said they had seen them only once in the past month (27%) or else not at all (39%).

Their family at the week-end

The most likely time of the week when elderly people would see younger members of their family would be the week-end. We therefore asked respondents about people they had visited at the previous week-end and about any visitors they had had. 'Did you have any visitors this last week-end?' Some respondents had had more than one set of visitors at the week-end; where this had happened, they were questioned about any second and/or third visits they had received. And for each visit they were asked to say who had come, how long they had stayed, and whether they had specifically come to help in any way.

Less than half (45%) of all those aged 75 or more had received even one set of visitors at the week-end, and of those two-thirds had been family and one-third friends; in other words, 30% (two-thirds of 45%) of all respondents were visited by members of their family. One of the more surprising findings was that those who were already living with others (usually a spouse or children) were a little more likely to have visitors than those who lived alone, and that of their visitors a much higher proportion were members of their family. Moreover, those who called on elderly people living alone were more prone to make comparatively brief calls of less than an hour and the purpose of their visit was much more concerned with the provision of specific aid (housework, cooking etc.), than with spending time informally and socially with the elderly person.

TABLE 26 (a). 'ANY VISITORS LAST WEEKEND?' FIRST SET OF VISITORS

		Men		Women		All 75 or more
		LA	NLA	LA	NLA	
Yes		%	%	%	%	%
		41	42	45	50	45
Who?	Family	59	70	53	76	65
	Friends	40	28	44	23	34
	Others	1	2	3	1	1
		100	100	100	100	100
How long?		%	%	%	%	%
Under 1 hour		33	23	21	14	21
1 hour-half day		60	66	62	72	65
Half day-1 day		7	6	10	8	8
Over 1 day		—	5	7	6	6
		100	100	100	100	100
Specifically to help?		%	%	%	%	%
Yes		60	12	25	10	20
What help?		%	%	%	%	%
Housework, cooking		53	7	27	32	30
Shopping		7	15	27	—	17
Gardening		8	13	12	10	11
Other jobs		32	65	34	58	42
		100	100	100	100	100

No more than 13% of respondents had received a second visit over the week-end; and again among those living alone the proportion at 12% was a little lower than among those living with others (14%) and lower among men than among women—12% compared with 14%. Slightly over 60% of these second visitors were family, and almost all the remainder were friends. As with the main visit 90% of the calls lasted less than half a day; but in very sharp contrast to the main visit, only 20% of these secondary visits were made specifically in order to help the elderly person.

Finally, 3% of respondents said that over the week-end they had had a third visit, and two-thirds of these had been family members; practically all (85%) of these third visits were made to men and women who lived with others. It would seem that if in old age one wishes to have visits—and particularly protracted visits—from one's family it is a disadvantage to live alone. For some who live alone this lack of visitors is something they regret; when respondents were asked if they would like to have more visits from their family and friends, one-quarter of those living alone said they would, but among those living with others the proportion that gave this answer was no more than one-sixth.

Of course, people aged 75 or more can, if they are anxious to make face-to-face contact with their family, take the initiative and go and see them. And therefore respondents were also asked if they had gone out of the house at all during the preceding week-end. Over half (56%) in this age-group said they

had done so on at least one occasion. However, the most frequent purpose for the outing was to do some shopping or collect their pension; slightly less than a quarter of the 56% had gone out at the week-end in order to visit either a relation or a friend.

The propensity to go out at the week-end was slightly greater among those living alone than among those living with others—59% as against 54%, but whereas two-thirds of the former made their excursion alone, only 39% of the latter did so. This was because practically all those living with others usually ventured out in the company either of a spouse or some other family member.

One might expect that as elderly people grow older and their health and mobility decline there would be increasing contact with their kin. To test this possibility respondents were asked: 'Compared with, say, five years ago, do you see more or less of your family?' The replies indicated that as perceived and remembered by the respondents any change that had occurred had been in the direction of appreciably less direct contact: 13% said they saw more of them, but nearly twice as many (23%) said they now saw less of their family. This adverse balance was most marked for men and women living alone.

TABLE 26 (b). 'COMPARED WITH, SAY, FIVE YEARS AGO, DO YOU SEE MORE OR LESS OF YOUR FAMILY?'

	Men		Women		All 75 or more
	LA	NLA	LA	NLA	
Now see:	%	%	%	%	%
A lot more	4	5	9	9	8
A little more	4	5	7	2	5
About the same	52	64	49	66	58
A little less	19	12	11	11	12
A lot less	15	8	15	7	11
D.K.	6	6	9	5	6
	100	100	100	100	100

Family help with the older elderly

There is one area in which one might reasonably look for the contribution of the family to the well being of the older elderly—the amount of physical help the latter receive from the family when in old age they are handicapped by limited ability to take care of themselves. To examine this respondents were asked if they had any difficulty in coping with various tasks. The range of possible answers ran from 'none at all, none because use of an aid, a little, quite a bit, impossible'. Table 27 shows, after excluding the 2% of bedfast or chairfast respondents, the proportions who for each task said they had a little difficulty, quite a bit of difficulty, or that it was impossible for them to manage it on their own. They were then asked if they had received any help in coping with each task they found difficult, and then, where they received any help, who provided most of this help.

The incidence of difficulty ranged from the 31% who had difficulty in taking

a bath by themselves to the 3% who had difficulty in feeding themselves. In all, the survey checked on 11 personal self-care tasks. On average only 27% of those with a difficulty said they received help. However, of those who did receive help just over 66% said that most of this help came either from a spouse or from some other family member. This is, of course, an impressively high figure but one must remember that 73% of those with a difficulty said they received no help, and well over half of these unaided handicapped men and women had family members. Unfortunately these lived too far away or were too busy to come and assist with feeding or putting on shoes, and, willingly or unwillingly, the old had to cope on their own. And where help was provided by the family it came mainly from a spouse, i.e. someone usually as old as the person requiring help.

TABLE 27 (a). SELF-CARE DIFFICULTIES OF 75 OR MORE GROUP†

	% with difficulty	Proportion of those receiving help	% of this from family
	%	%	%
Taking a bath	31	36	69
Getting around the house/flat	20	26	58
Putting on stockings/socks	16	20	80
Putting on shoes	15	26	90
Getting in and out of bed	15	18	82
Having an overall wash	11	50	59
Dressing self	10	29	78
Using the WC	8	15	69
Combing (brushing) hair*	6	23	30
Feeding	3	25	53
Shaving (men only)	3	30	60
Average of above figures	13	27	66

†Excluding the 2% bedfast/chairfast

*Women only

One further question yielded information on family support for the very elderly. All men living alone and all women, whether living alone or not, were asked if they received any help from anyone with their shopping, their housework and their cooking; those who said they did were then asked who gave them this help.

Almost half of them (48%) said they received help with their shopping and of this 15% came from a spouse and 45% from some other family member. A little over two-fifths (43%) received help with their housework, but only 39% of this came from a family member—12% from a spouse and 27% from some other family member.

And only 22% received help with the preparation and cooking of food, and almost two-thirds of this help came from a family member—20% from a spouse and 42% from another member of the family.

In all three tasks help from a husband was appreciable; but, of course, this was not available to the 60% of all women in this age group who lived alone.

TABLE 27 (b). HELP WITH VARIOUS HOUSEKEEPING TASKS

		All 75+	Men LA	Women LA	NLA
% who receive help with:		%	%	%	%
	Shopping	48	35	49	50
	Housework	43	45	41	45
	Cooking	22	31	12	34
Shopping-help from:		%	%	%	%
	Spouse	15	—	—	39
	Other family	45	46	43	49
	Non-family	40	54	57	12
		100	100	100	100
Housework help:		%	%	%	%
	Spouse	12	—	—	36
	Other family	27	31	20	55
	Non-family	61	69	80	9
		100	100	100	100
Cooking help:		%	%	%	%
	Spouse	20	—	—	36
	Other family	42	31	20	55
	Non-family	38	69	80	9
		100	100	100	100

Of all those receiving help in this age group, 2.4% said that help with shopping came from a voluntary social worker, and 2.5% said that help with their housework was also provided by a voluntary social worker. The biggest contribution made by statutory social workers was with housework where 36% of those receiving such aid gave this as the source; home helps presumably make a considerable contribution to the ability of the very elderly to cope with everyday life.

Those aged 65–74

The survey studied this age group in order to compare the conditions of two different generations—the younger elderly and the older elderly—and to anticipate something of the probable character and circumstances of those who will constitute the older elderly population of the 1980s.

Their parents

Less than half of 1% of respondents had a father who was still alive; another 5% did not know the age at which their fathers had died but the answers of the others indicated a median age at death of 72—exactly the same figure as that given by the older elderly. As in the older age-group, the three most commonly

named causes of death were heart diseases (18%), respiratory diseases (17%), cancers (12%); and again, 12% of fathers were said to have died of 'old age'.

Only 1% of respondents said their mothers were still alive; the answers of the others, leaving aside the 4% who were uncertain of the age at which their mothers had died, produced a median mortality age of 74—only one year less than the figure given by the older age group. In all the four subgroups (men living alone, men living with others, women living alone and women living with others) over one-third of respondents reported a mother who had lived beyond her 80th birthday.

The most commonly named causes of death were usually the same as those mentioned by the older generation—'old age' (18%), cancers (16%), strokes, thromboses, etc. (16%), and respiratory diseases (13%).

So far, then, the aspects of parental background discussed have been more or less identical for both age-bands of elderly people.

Their brothers and sisters

On average these younger respondents had, compared with their elders, been members of smaller families; the average here was 4.0 brothers and sisters, as compared with 4.4 in the older sample. This reduction was common to all four sub-groups (living alone, not living alone, etc.) and reflects the greater frequency of parents producing only two or three children. Thus, among our respondents aged 75 or more only 23% said they had had one or two siblings, but in the younger age group the proportion with this family background rose to 32%.

A further and not surprising difference between the two age groups was that as many as 83% of the young elderly said that at least one of their siblings was still alive; among the older elderly this figure was no more than 69%. However, the younger group was no more likely than its elders to have seen any of these surviving brothers and sisters: in both groups 24% said they had seen one or more of them at least once a week and, at the other extreme, in both, approximately 45% claimed they had seen any of their siblings either once a year or even less frequently. It would seem then that as our present young elderly population age during the 1980s, they are no more likely than the old elderly people to have a family life that includes any more face-to-face contact between brothers and sisters. Indeed, there may well be less, since the present 65 to 74 group started out with fewer siblings.

Their marital status

In this younger group more of the men were married and living with their spouses—79% as against 67% in the older group. However, among these younger women less than half (45%) were still married; the others were either widows (34%), divorced or separated (4%), or had never married (17%). This last figure was still affected by the male casualties of World War II. Thus, in answering the question about surviving and non-surviving siblings it emerged

that of all non-surviving brothers nearly 40% had died as war casualties before reaching the age of 35. Unless there is a significant increase in the life-expectation of men aged 65 to 74, it is therefore highly probable that the next generation of old elderly people will, like today's, contain at least half who are widowed and only one-third will have a spouse. So far, there are no signs of any significant increase in the life-expectation of men aged 65 to 74.

Their children

As a group, respondents aged 65 to 74 have failed to reproduce themselves; slightly over 30% had never had any children and a further 22% had had only one child. Their gross reproduction rate was 1.6 offspring and was thus very slightly below the figure of 1.7 produced by their elders. A handful of respondents had outlived any children they had had, so that altogether 33% of all these young elderly people are childless.

The 67% with living children rarely lived with them; only 15% were in this sharing position. Another 30% had one or more of their offspring living nearby in the same street or the same neighbourhood; but over two-fifths of those with children said that they either lived more than six miles away (36%) or else lived abroad (6%). Thus, the geographical distance between parents and offspring is already greater than that found among the older cohort of parents where 38% of their children lived either abroad or more than six miles away.

The younger parents saw their offspring a little less frequently than did the elder parents. When questioned about the frequency with which they had seen any of their children during the four weeks before the interview, two-thirds of the younger parents said they had met on at least four occasions, but 25% said that they had seen each other only once (14%) or not at all (11%). Among the older parents, nearly three-quarters had seen their children at least once during the preceding month. This lower rate of contact between younger parents and their children presumably does not have its origin in indifference on the part of parents; when parents aged 65-74 were asked if they would like to see their children more often, 45% said they would; among parents aged 75 or more, the proportion giving this reply was no more than 39%.

Their grandchildren

The 70% of young elderly people who had ever had any children were further questioned about any grandchildren they had. In 1977 (and some of them may have more grandchildren in future) they had performed slightly less well than their elders; only 2% of the 65-74 group could claim 16 or more grandchildren, as compared with the 9% reported by those 75 or more. On the other hand, a full two-thirds of the young elderly had between one and five grandchildren; among their elders the proportion in this position was 60%.

However 'young' grandparents see more of their grandchildren than do 'old' grandparents. Of those in the 65-74 group with grandchildren 57% had seen them at least once in the four weeks before the interview—a substantially

higher figure than the 46% recorded by the 75-or-more grandparents. Moreover, even this more frequent contact left many of the younger grandparents unsatisfied; half of them said they would like to see more of their grandchildren; 72% attributed their frustration to problems of distance—either their grandchildren lived too far away (60%) or they lived abroad (12%).

Their great-grandchildren

Of the 70% of respondents who had had children only 10% reported that they had any great-grandchildren, and nearly half of these said there had been no meeting with them at any time in the past four weeks. One-half of all great-grandparents said they would like more frequent contact, but most of them added that this was not possible because they lived too far away.

The family at the week-end

A little over two-fifths (42%) of these younger respondents had had at least one visitor during the week-end before the interview—slightly less than the 45% reported by their elders. Of these visitors three-quarters were family and

TABLE 28. 'ANY VISITORS LAST WEEKEND?': FIRST SET OF VISITORS

	Men		Women		All 65-74
	LA	NLA	LA	NLA	
Yes	% 20	% 43	% 44	% 44	% 42
Who?	%	%	%	%	%
Family	60	85	64	72	74
Friends	40	14	36	26	25
Others	—	1	—	2	1
	100	100	100	100	100
How long?	%	%	%	%	%
Under 1 hour	29	9	18	10	12
1 hour — ½ day	71	71	56	73	68
½ day — 1 day	—	6	17	11	11
Over 1 day	—	14	9	6	9
	100	100	100	100	100
Specifically to help?	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	38	10	15	5	10
What help?	%	%	%	%	%
Housework, cooking	43	49	11	—	25
Shopping	22	11	12	26	15
Gardening	—	22	8	12	13
Other jobs	35	18	69	62	47
	100	100	100	100	100

one-quarter friends; thus, compared with their elders, visits from family were more frequent—74% as compared with 65%. Their visitors tended to stay longer—only 12% were for less than one hour (the comparable proportion of short visits for their elders was 21%). They were much less likely to be visits made specifically to give some form of help to the host—only 10% were described in this way (compared with 20% for the older group) and the aid was mainly to help men with their housework and cooking. Only 30% had had a second visitor over the week-end and less than 10% received a third visit, though these percentages were substantially higher than the corresponding figures (13% and 3%) for the older group. In both supplementary visits the caller had been a family member.

Compared with those aged 75 or more, the younger respondents had gone out more at the week-end—68% of them as against 56% of their elders. In both age bands, slightly less than a quarter of the excursions had been made in order to visit relations or friends; in both the most usual purpose was to do the shopping or collect the pension. Of those living alone who had gone out, 68% had done so alone; of the remaining 32% slightly over half had been accompanied by a relative. Of those not living alone who had gone out at the week-end only 39% had been alone; the other 61% had a companion and this was almost invariably either a spouse or some other family member with whom they lived.

In common with their elders more younger respondents reported that they thought they were now seeing less of their family compared with five years ago, than thought they were seeing more of them. A solid majority, however, reported there had been no change.

TABLE 29. 'COMPARED WITH, SAY, FIVE YEARS AGO, DO YOU SEE MORE OR LESS OF YOUR FAMILY?'

	Men		Women		All 65-74
	LA	NLA	LA	NLA	
	%	%	%	%	%
A lot more	3	6	9	8	7
A little more	5	5	8	6	6
About the same	59	62	56	62	61
A little less	8	11	11	10	10
A lot less	10	13	10	10	11
D.K.	15	3	6	4	5
	100	100	100	100	100

Coping with self-care

Among this younger group the incidence of reported difficulty with self-care was comparatively low; on only two tasks (having a bath and getting round the house) did the proportion go above the 10% level. But as with the older group, usually only very small minorities said they received any help with these tasks. However, when aid was forthcoming the provider was almost invariably a family member; the family member was usually a spouse; and the

helping spouse was usually a woman. It would seem then that with increasing age there is a decline in family support for those who have self-care difficulties; and this decline springs in part from the decline in the number of family members (this particularly affects women), and in part because both statutory and voluntary social workers tend to concentrate their aid on the very elderly.

TABLE 30 (a). SELF-CARE DIFFICULTIES OF 65-74 AGE GROUP

	% with difficulty	Proportion of these receiving help	% of this from family
	%	%	%
Having a bath	13	29	78
Getting round the house	11	2	100
Getting into/out of bed	8	10	100
Putting on shoes	8	24	95
Putting on stockings/socks	8	17	100
Having overall wash	6	43	80
Dressing self	5	23	86
Using W.C.	4	20	100
Combing hair (women)	3	28	100
Shaving (men)	3	60	69
Feeding self	2	24	78
Average of above figures	6	25	90

Housekeeping

In each of the three housekeeping tasks of shopping, housework and cooking only small minorities of the younger men (living alone) and women said they received any help—26% with their shopping, 23% with their housework and 10% with their cooking. These figures are understandably much lower than those for the more elderly group: 48%, 43%, 22% respectively. On all three, women living alone received little help and women not living alone received most; of the latter group those given help obtained two-thirds of it from their spouse. Men and women living alone and receiving help obtained most of it from non-family sources—usually from friends and neighbours.

TABLE 30 (b). HELP WITH VARIOUS HOUSEKEEPING TASKS

		All 65-74	Men LA	Women LA	NLA
% who receive help with:		%	%	%	%
	Shopping	26	20	17	33
	Housework	23	26	13	29
	Cooking	10	15	2	15
Shopping help:		%	%	%	%
	Spouse	48	—	—	69
	Other family	31	35	45	26
	Non-family	21	65	55	5
		100	100	100	100
Housework help:		%	%	%	%
	Spouse	47	—	—	67
	Other family	22	23	22	21
	Non-family	31	77	78	12
		100	100	100	100
Cooking help:		%	%	%	%
	Spouse	48	—	—	59
	Other family	33	18	54	33
	Non-family	19	82	46	8
		100	100	100	100

V ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

THE DEPARTMENT of Employment's Family Expenditure Survey¹ found that in 1977 in those households that consisted of one man or one woman living alone the average gross normal weekly income was £29.73, and that 63% of this came from social security benefits with much of the remainder having its sources in interest and dividends on savings (13%) and annuities and occupational pensions (12%). Presumably this is a good indication of the economic circumstances of that 36% of our sample that consisted of men and women living alone. However, the figures quoted in Volume 1 of *Profiles of the Elderly* (Age Concern 1977) from the 1975 National Readership Survey indicate that within the age group 65 to 74 men's incomes are 20% higher than those of women of the same age and 15% higher than those of men aged 75 or more. The main reason for these age and sex differences is that men are more likely than women to be receiving an occupational pension and that such occupational pensions are relatively more common among younger elderly men than among older elderly men. In this survey we did not ask the respondent to state the household income, but since the two samples resembled each other in so many other ways there is every reason to believe that among the members of our sample there prevailed the same differences related to sex and age.

We also know from the 1977 Family Expenditure Survey something of the wide inequalities of gross income that existed among those households where the head of the household was a retired person. That survey showed that among those 'retired households' over one-eighth (13%) had weekly gross incomes that were £80 or more. However, the same survey showed that the 'non-affluent' retired households (i.e. with incomes below £30 a week) constituted 75% of all 'non-affluent' households in the country, while the 'affluent' retired households (i.e. with weekly incomes of £80 or more) amounted to only 6% of all 'affluent' British households. In other words, we expected to find in our survey inequalities of economic circumstances among the elderly but that where they occurred they would be on a lower level than among the general population.

Those aged 75 or more

Almost the only direct question on income asked, 'From which of these listed sources do you or your husband/wife at present get incomes?' Where more than one source was named, the respondent was asked to indicate which was the main source. For both sexes the State pension was the main source of income; it was so designated by 82% of men and 90% of women. Another 11% of men but only 3% of women said that the pension they received from a former employer exceeded their State pension. A handful of men living alone (4%) were undertaking sufficient paid work to name earnings as their main

¹ Family Expenditure Survey, HMSO, 1978.

source of income. In the sample as a whole only 4% had sufficient paid work to name earnings as their main source of income, and only 4% had sufficient capital to provide dividends and interest as their main source of income.

TABLE 31. INFORMANT'S MAIN SOURCE OF INCOME

	Men		Women		All 75 or more
	LA	NLA	LA	NLA	
	%	%	%	%	%
State pension	78	83	88	92	87
Pension from ex-employer	14	11	4	2	6
From children	—	—	—	1	*
From other relatives	—	—	—	—	—
Supplementary benefit	—	—	2	2	1
Earnings	4	1	—	*	1
Investment/savings	3	4	6	3	4
Other	1	1	*	—	1
	100	100	100	100	100

* = less than 0.5%

Practically all those living alone (98% of the men and 92% of the women) claimed to have a secondary source of income, and many of them said that they had more than one additional source. For example, of the men living alone 42% had a secondary income from dividends and interest; 28% from supplementary benefit, and 27% from an ex-employer pension, and 22% described their State pension as a secondary source of income. The pattern of secondary incomes received by women living alone is very different and indicates their relative poverty, as compared with men living alone; as many as 44% of these women said their secondary income was in the form of supplementary benefit. Contributions from children helped 5% of all those aged 75 or more and many of the additional 5% of secondary sources classified in the Table as 'Don't Know' were gifts of money from children and others which respondents found it difficult to describe as 'income' because of their irregularity. In both groups of women, those living alone and those living with others, there were many fewer recipients of pensions from a former employer than the two matching groups of men.

TABLE 32. INFORMANT'S OTHER SOURCES OF INCOME

	Men		Women		All 75 or more
	LA	NLA	LA	NLA	
	%	%	%	%	%
Investment/savings	42	34	31	23	30
Supplementary benefit	28	18	44	14	28
Pension from ex-employer	27	35	14	9	19
State pension	22	17	9	6	11
Earnings	7	3	1	2	2
From children	2	3	4	10	5
From other relatives	1	2	*	2	1
Other	14	6	5	6	7
D.K.	2	3	4	10	5
Total	145	121	112	82	108
None %	2	12	8	29	14

One question sought to obtain from respondents a monetary assessment of any sense of poverty and deprivation. They were asked 'How much extra money, if any, would you (and your household) need each week in order to live without money worries and in reasonable comfort?' Perhaps surprisingly, a solid majority (57%) indicated that they were already living 'without money worries and in reasonable comfort' since their answer to this question was 'none'. Another 12% said they could have achieved this state with an extra £4 or less a week. Among those living alone, both men and women, over 60% said they needed no extra money.

TABLE 33. EXTRA MONEY NEEDED WEEKLY

	Men		Women		All 75 or more
	LA	NLA	LA	NLA	
	%	%	%	%	%
None	61	54	61	53	57
£4 or less	11	8	15	12	12
£5	15	16	12	15	14
£6 – £10	5	14	4	7	8
£11 or more	1	2	1	5	2
D.K.	7	6	7	8	7
Total	100	100	100	100	100

The minority (43% of all respondents aged 75 or more) who said they needed more money in order to live 'without money worries and in reasonable comfort' were then asked: 'What do you *most* need the extra amount for?' Almost 10% of them were unable to mention any specific need but almost three-quarters named one of three needs for which they needed the extra money—heating (31%), food (28%) and clothing (12%). (If these figures are related to the total sample of those aged 75 or more, they are, of course, more than halved, and become 14% for heating, 12% for food and 5% for clothing.)

The same minority was asked: 'How would you rate your chances of getting that extra money over the next year or two?' There were very few optimists among them: two-thirds (67%) said their chances were nil; 12% rated them as 'slight'; only 2% thought their chances of getting the extra money were 'fair', and the remainder felt unable to give any assessment of the likelihood of any such increase in their income.

A second approach to the measurement of need among the older elderly took the form of asking all of them about any deprivation they had experienced in the recent past because of a lack of money. They were asked: 'Is there anything that you have wanted, but have had to go without or not been able to do in the past year because you haven't had enough money?' To this question exactly 25% of respondents gave affirmative answers, and when these were asked to specify the deprivations they had experienced the same three items received over half of the mentions (clothing 27%, food 15%, heating 13%) but this time a fourth deprivation appeared high on the list—16% said they had gone without a holiday because they lacked money. Again, if these figures are related to the total sample of elderly old people, the

figures are considerably reduced with 7% specifying clothing, 4% food, 4% holidays and 3% heating.

At different points in the interview, questions were put to respondents in order to arrive at their overall feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their financial circumstances. They all pointed in the same direction: a substantial majority—perhaps as many as 80%—expressed satisfaction with their then current incomes and material resources. It should be remembered that most of these respondents aged 75 or more had had at least 10 years' experience of adjustment to reduced post-retirement incomes.

When asked: 'How would you describe your present financial position?' only 7% selected 'can't make ends meet' from the three proffered answers, 66% chose 'have enough to get along' and 27% decided that 'comfortable' was the most apt description of their position. This last response was even higher among men living alone (35%), but this above-average rating was at the expense of 'have enough to get along'; otherwise there were no significant deviations from the overall figures.

At a later point in the interview respondents were asked: 'On the whole, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your present financial position?' This time over one-third (35%) said they were completely satisfied, and nearly another half (48%) described themselves as fairly satisfied. Those living alone—this time both men and women—were more prone than others to express complete satisfaction.

TABLE 34. SATISFACTION/DISSATISFACTION WITH PRESENT FINANCIAL POSITION

	Men		Women		All 75 or more
	LA	NLA	LA	NLA	
	%	%	%	%	%
Completely satisfied	43	31	38	32	35
Fairly satisfied	40	49	48	52	48
Fairly dissatisfied	11	12	10	11	11
Very dissatisfied	2	7	4	5	5
D.K.	4	1	*	—	1
	100	100	100	100	100

When respondents' perceptions were directed towards the future, nearly two-thirds of them expressed confidence in their future material circumstances. This time the confidence (or optimism) of those living alone,

TABLE 35. CONFIDENCE IN FUTURE INCOME SECURITY

	Men		Women		All 75 or more
	LA	NLA	LA	NLA	
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	72	55	65	58	61
No	16	32	23	31	27
D.K.	12	13	12	11	12
	100	100	100	100	100

both men and women, was even more marked than that of men and women living with others. The question asked at this point was: 'Do you feel that your present sources of income give you security for the future?'

The consistency of this higher level of satisfaction with their material conditions expressed by men and women living alone might suggest that when they can afford it old people, particularly men, prefer to live on their own. However, an account of their material possessions indicates that what is more likely is that people living alone tend to have more modest aspirations and expectations and that therefore high levels of satisfaction are more easily attained.

Respondents were questioned about their possession of various durable consumer goods and services, about holidays away from home and about house ownership. Of the eight items checked there were four where levels of consumption among the older elderly were reasonably close to those of the British people as a whole—home ownership, and possession of a telephone, a television set and a refrigerator. Of the other four, however—washing machine, central heating, household car, and a holiday away from home in the previous 12 months—the older elderly lagged well behind the national figures. Moreover, there were some substantial differences in ownership and consumption ratios between those who lived alone and those who lived with others. The former, irrespective of sex, were much less likely to have a washing machine, access to a car, a refrigerator, a colour TV, and a telephone. Some of these differences arose presumably because those living with others had in mind goods owned by others in the household.

TABLE 36. POSSESSIONS AND HOLIDAYS

	Men		Women		All 75 or more
	LA	NLA	LA	NLA	
Possess:	%	%	%	%	%
Washing machine	24	47	19	43	33
Central heating	27	25	29	26	27
Car in household	9	25	2	28	15
Refrigerator	69	88	74	87	81
Colour television	19	33	23	41	30
Black and white TV	68	74	66	59	66
Telephone	32	57	48	63	53
Had holiday in past year	40	36	43	43	41
Own their house (self or other member of household)	44	54	44	60	51

For each item dealt with, those who had given negative answers were asked the following supplementary questions:

(a) 'Would you like one?' And for those who said they would this was followed by: (b) 'Do you expect to get one in the next year or so?'

One-half of all those who had had no holiday in the previous year said they would have liked one, and over two-fifths of those without a telephone said they would have liked to have one; these are the two main frustrations that emerged from this question. On each of three durable consumer goods—central heating, refrigerator and colour television—approximately a quarter of those without these goods would have liked to have them. The

durables missed least were a car and a black and white television set. On all eight items the frustration rates were very much the same for those who lived alone and those who lived with others. And as far as most of the goods are concerned, the great majority of frustrated people (around 90%) didn't expect their frustrations to be removed in the next year or two. Only among those who had not had a holiday but would have liked one was there much optimism; but even here less than 40% of those who had not had a holiday (59% of the sample) but would have liked one expected that they would get one in the next year or so.

TABLE 37. FRUSTRATED CONSUMER RATES (ALL 75 OR MORE)

	% who don't have	Of whom would like	Would like but don't expect
	%	%	%
Washing machine	67	17	96
Central heating	73	24	94
Car in household	85	6	95
Refrigerator	19	29	80
Colour TV	70	26	94
Black and white TV	34	4	84
Telephone	47	42	93
Holiday	59	49	61

Those aged 65 to 74

As with the older elderly, over 80% of the younger elderly gave as their main source of income their State pension. Of the small minorities giving other answers the men were more prone than their elders to name earnings as still their main source of income, and among younger women there were already 5% who said that an occupational pension was the main source.

TABLE 38 (a). INFORMANT'S MAIN SOURCE OF INCOME

	Men		Women	
	65-74	75+	65-74	75+
	%	%	%	%
State pension	82	82	83	90
Pension, ex-employer	10	11	5	3
Earnings	4	2	3	*
Investment/savings	3	4	4	4
Other (children etc.)	1	1	5	3
	100	100	100	100

Thus, for main sources of income the two groups give almost identical patterns of answers for both men and women. But for secondary sources of income it is necessary to look at the two sexes separately, since the 65 to 74 age group contains a much higher proportion of men and this difference in sex composition is important in considering these other sources of income. Men are much more likely than women to enjoy secondary sources of income, and

this is due to the fact that 42% of the men receive occupational pensions but only 12% of women have them. In addition, over one-third of the men have income from their savings and investments; such income is received by only one-quarter of the women. Both for men and women the pattern of secondary sources of income is almost identical for the two age-groups; the only outstanding exception is the greater dependence of the older cohort on supplementary benefit and the greater tendency of the younger men and women to supplement their incomes through earnings.

TABLE 38 (b). INFORMANT'S OTHER SOURCES OF INCOME

	Men		Women	
	65-74	75+	65-74	75+
	%	%	%	%
Pension from ex-employer	42	33	12	12
Investment/savings	35	36	26	28
State pension	15	18	10	8
Supplementary benefit	12	20	20	32
Earnings	10	3	7	2
From children	2	3	4	6
Other relatives	1	1	1	1
Other	5	8	6	6
D.K.	2	3	8	6
Total	124	125	94	101
	%	%	%	%
None	10	10	19	16

Only 44% of the younger cohort (compared with 57% of their elders) said that they needed no extra money in order to live without money worries and in reasonable comfort; this lesser degree of contentment was common to both sexes and to both types of households. Moreover, those who felt they did need extra money pitched their levels of necessary money appreciably higher than did their elders. To some extent this was because respondents in the younger cohort were more usually thinking of the needs of two or more people since a larger proportion of them were married; but even when sex and household composition are held constant, as in Table 39, it will be seen that the younger men, whether living alone or living with others, were more prone to feel that they needed extra money to live comfortably and more likely to say that they needed at least an extra £6 a week or more to attain this state.

TABLE 39. EXTRA MONEY NEEDED WEEKLY

	Men LA		Men NLA	
	65-74	75+	65-74	75+
	%	%	%	%
None	50	61	40	54
£4 or less	10	11	5	8
£5	17	15	19	16
£6-£10	14	5	19	14
£11 or more	2	1	12	2
D.K.	7	7	5	6
	100	100	100	100

When the 56% of younger old people who said they needed more money to live comfortably were asked what they most needed this for, the broad pattern of their answers was very much the same as that of their elders: 32% said for heating, 25% for food and 12% for clothing. They added, however, some minor needs that had not occurred to their elders. Thus, 3% mentioned holidays, 2% wanted it to buy a refrigerator or some other durable consumer goods, and another 2% wanted the extra money so as to be able to afford occasional luxuries.

But when it came to assessing their chances of getting this extra money, the younger men and women were even more pessimistic than their elders: 75% (compared with 67%) rated their chances as nil, 11% said they were slight and only 2% regarded them as fair; the remaining 9% were too uncertain to commit themselves.

In answering the other deprivation question, over one-third (35%) of the younger cohort said that because of the lack of money, they had had over the preceding year to go without, or had not been able to do something they wanted; this was appreciably higher than the 25% of older people who had said this. The pattern of deprivations they named was also different. Fewer mentioned clothing (21%) and food (5%), and more named holidays (20%), various durables (10%) and entertainments (7%). But in both age groups deprivation of heating was claimed by 13% of respondents who had lacked money to meet their needs.

In the first of the questions asking about the respondent's overall satisfaction with his financial position, the two age groups were alike: in both groups a very large majority said either that they were completely satisfied or else fairly satisfied, but fewer of the younger generation expressed themselves as 'completely satisfied' (24% as against 35% of their elders) and more as 'fairly satisfied' (54% as against 48%).

Among the younger respondents there was a tendency for those living alone, both men and women, to express more dissatisfaction with their financial position than those living with others. This tendency, the reverse of what was expressed by the older cohort, could have had its origins in the fact that in the younger group the experiences of passing from work to retirement and from marriage to widowhood were more recent.

The replies to the later questions, which asked respondents to assess (with the aid of prompted responses) their overall financial position, were almost identical for the two age groups. Of the younger group 8% said they could not make ends meet (7% among their elders), 67% said they had enough to get along (as against 66%), and 25% chose to describe their positions as 'comfortable' (as against 27%).

This similarity, however, was not repeated when respondents were asked to look ahead. The question put to them was: 'Do you feel that your present sources of income give you security for the future?' A solid majority of the older elderly (61%) had answered 'yes'; but the comparable figure for the younger elderly was less than half (49%); the latter group's relatively gloomy view of the future was most marked among women living with others (usually a husband) for whom the probability of widowhood in the near future may have been a serious concern.

TABLE 40. CONFIDENCE IN FUTURE INCOME SECURITY

	Men		Women		All
	LA	NLA	LA	NLA	65-74
Yes	% 57	% 50	% 54	% 43	% 49
No	35	40	30	45	39
D.K.	8	10	16	12	12
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

In terms of material possessions, the younger cohort was better off than their elders. A much larger proportion had access to a washing machine, a car, and colour television and had had a holiday during the previous 12 months. On some of the other items—for example, central heating, and possession of a refrigerator and a telephone—their advantages were comparatively small; the proportion living in an owner-occupied dwelling was almost the same as the proportion recorded among those 75 or more.

As with their elders, the younger elderly people living with others were much better equipped with durable goods than were those living alone. The advantages of the latter were particularly marked in terms of access to a washing machine, to a car, to colour TV and to a telephone; on the other hand men and women in the younger groups living alone were often much better off than their elders living alone; this reflects the general advantage of the younger over the older groups in terms of material possessions.

TABLE 41. POSSESSIONS AND HOLIDAYS

	Men		Women		All
	LA	NLA	LA	NLA	65-74
Possess:	%	%	%	%	%
Washing machine	28	56	30	52	47
Central heating	28	36	34	32	34
Car in household	15	48	8	37	33
Refrigerator	66	90	84	92	88
Colour TV	25	53	27	48	44
Black and white TV	63	53	63	53	56
Telephone	40	61	52	64	59
Holiday in past year	43	54	59	59	56
Own their dwelling (self or other member of household)	40	59	42	56	53

For most of those goods and services not enjoyed by a majority of the younger cohort—for example, washing machine, central heating, colour TV and a car—it would appear that most people accepted the deprivation: for instance, only 13% of those without access to a household car said that they would like to have one; even among those without a colour TV only one-third said that was something they would like to have. The largest measures of frustration were usually recorded for those items where those who did not have them were a minority—holidays and telephones. A little over two-fifths of those 65 to 74 years of age did not have these, and two-thirds of those who

had not had a holiday said they would like one and nearly half of those without access to a telephone said this was something they would like to have.

For the most part the pessimism of these unwilling non-consumers was almost as wide as among their counterparts in the older age group; frequently around 90% of them said they did not expect to acquire over the next year or two the items they had missed. The only exception to this related to holidays where a little under half of the frustrated respondents felt that they would get one in the next year or two.

TABLE 42. FRUSTRATED CONSUMER RATES (ALL 65-74)

	% who don't have	Of whom would like	Would like but don't expect
	%	%	%
Washing machine	53	23	89
Central heating	66	28	92
Car	67	13	88
Refrigerator	12	38	70
Colour TV	56	35	94
Black and white TV	43	5	63
Telephone	41	47	92
Holiday	43	65	54

VI WOMEN IN OLD AGE

IN EACH of the four urban areas where the survey was carried out approximately two-thirds of all those aged 75 or more were women (71% in Hove and Moss Side, 64% in Merton and Northampton); and of these women, in all the four towns, approximately 60% lived alone. In each of the three life-domains dealt with in this report (family life, leisure, and economic conditions) there were, between women who lived alone and women who lived with others, some striking differences in resources and behaviour. For example, in the field of leisure the average woman living alone spent more time each day on the four main indoor passive leisure pursuits—watching TV, listening to radio, reading, and just resting. Admittedly she was more likely to have gone out during the week-end; but two-thirds of her outings were undertaken alone, whereas little more than one-quarter of those living with others had made their trips without a companion. And those women living alone were less likely to have had any visitors at the week-end.

In their economic conditions women living alone were much less likely than other elderly women to have access to a household washing machine, a car, a refrigerator, a telephone and a colour television set—goods which could either lighten household chores or increase communication with others.

But the biggest differences between the two groups of older women were in the field of family life. Among those living alone the proportion who were widows was more than twice as high as among those living with others (79% against 38%); the proportion who had never had any children was 50% higher (39% against 26%); the proportion with near access to an offspring or in the same street or neighbourhood was little more than half (22% against 39%); they were much less likely to have seen an offspring in the preceding week (40% against 58%), less likely to have any living siblings (65% against 75%), and much less likely to have seen a brother or sister in the preceding week (14% against 25%); and a higher proportion of those living alone said that they saw less of their family than they had five years previously.

In some areas of life and for some people and on some occasions the companionship and support of friends can replace fully those no longer available through family ties. The survey indicates that most old elderly women living alone felt that they were abundantly surrounded by good friends; and their perceptions of these matched those of women living with others. Thus when respondents were asked 'How many close friends do you have living in or near this district?' and were offered a choice from three possible answers—'many', 'only a few', or 'none'—23% of women living alone said many, 61% said only a few and 16% said none. The corresponding figures for women living with others were 21%, 54% and 25%. Again, when they were asked to comment (true/false) on the statement 'I have all the good friends anyone could wish for', 72% of women living alone indicated this was true of their own circumstances and the corresponding figure for women living with others was only a little higher at 79%.

However, despite this broad equality in friendships, feelings of loneliness, depression, and alienation are much more widespread among elderly women

living alone than those who lived with others and had their family ties supplemented by friendships. The various life-satisfaction and life-adjustment scales used in the survey included at least nine statements that aimed to measure these feelings. On every one of them the negative replies of those living alone were much higher than those of women living with others. The gap between the two groups was very wide on measures of loneliness and on access to those with whom one could talk about personal matters. In short, the feelings recorded in Table 43 indicate that for the one-third of all those aged 75 or more who both lived alone and were without any surviving offspring and any nearby siblings the advantage of having 'all the good friends anyone could wish' failed to match the advantages that come from living with a spouse, with offspring or with siblings.

TABLE 43. SOME FEELINGS OF WOMEN 75 OR MORE

	% saying	(a) LA	(b) NLA	(b) as % of (a)
I never dreamed that I could be as lonely as I am now	True	% 32	% 8	% 25
I have no one to talk to about personal things	True	27	7	26
I've got pretty much what I expected out of life	Disagree	14	6	43
I felt very lonely or remote from other people	Yes	29	13	45
I no longer do anything that is of real use to others	True	40	22	55
I feel just miserable most of the time	True	12	7	58
Compared with other people, I get down in the dumps too often	Agree	22	13	59
All my needs are taken care of	False	16	10	63
I am just as happy now as when I was younger	False	58	42	72
	Average	28	14	50

VII SOME POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Leisure

GIVEN THE large amount of time spent by the average person aged 75 or more watching television and listening to the radio (4.1 hours daily), it would seem that much more use should be made of these media to provide the elderly with information, entertainment, features and education of the kind they would find relevant to their needs, interests, and preferences—and often necessary for their welfare.

At the same time, it is clear that a sizeable minority (almost 20%) of the elderly would like more contact with the printed word and presumably this would be possible if there were easier access for them to 'large print' books and to 'speaking books', cassettes and discs.

Although relatively few elderly people are housebound in a technical sense, yet, on the average day, a majority do not go out for a walk largely because of lesser ailments and physical difficulties. Very few of them are in households which own a car and most of them live alone. 'Good Neighbouring' might well embrace accompanying an elderly person on a walk or taking them for a car ride. And local public transport services could be more generous and more imaginative in the services they provide for elderly people.

Family

For well over one-third of all elderly people it is certainly not a 'fact that family members are available who can fill the role of unpaid nurses and home helper'. When they need, or feel they need, care they are dependent primarily upon the informal support of neighbours and friends. As we have seen (in the First Report), this is often not forthcoming. We need more research to discover what are the social conditions most likely to produce what might be called 'pseudo-family' relationships for those who either lack kin altogether or are separated from those they have by distances that make even occasional visits difficult if not impossible. Simultaneously we need to expand the provision of home-like housing environments for small groups of elderly people.

Economic conditions

Since high rates of inflation apparently constitute an insoluble problem, then clearly even the present modest levels of economic well-being of most elderly people can only be maintained if *all* sources of their incomes are index-linked. Presumably nowadays this can be taken for granted where the State pension and supplementary benefit and public service occupational pensions are concerned; but many elderly people will continue to be anxious about their economic future as long as the same process is not extended to income

from their savings and from the pensions they receive from private employers.

Given the large minorities of respondents who said that they had needed and would need extra income to meet adequate levels of expenditure on heating and clothing, then, in a time when increasing domestic energy costs are certain, policies which enable the elderly to keep warm and dry must have a high priority.

One of the outstanding deprivations of the elderly (in their own eyes) is their inability to take a holiday; in France (through e.g. 'villages de vacances') and in the United States (through e.g. 'Elderhostel' schemes which concentrate on combining holidays with a wide choice of academic courses) elderly people of all social classes are able to enjoy satisfying and cheap holidays. Comparable projects in this country could be launched to bring holidays within the reach of the 30% of the elderly who do not have a holiday away from home, would like such a holiday, but have no hope of having one.

APPENDIX A

Comparison of 4-town survey with DHSS/Hunt 65-74 age group

			DHSS %	Age Concern %
1. Marital status	Men:	Married	79.2	78.7
		Widowed	14.1	13.2
		Single	4.6	5.9
		Div/sep	2.1	2.2
			100.0	100.0
	Women:	Married	47.8	44.4
		Widowed	39.0	34.3
		Single	10.0	16.8
		Div/sep	3.2	4.6
			100.0	100.0
2. Household composition	Men:	Living alone	13.6	12.6
		Living with others	86.4	87.4
			100.0	100.0
	Women:	Living alone	33.6	39.4
		Living with others	66.4	60.6
			100.0	100.0
3. Tenure		Own outright	46.3	47.8
		Own, mortgage	3.0	5.3
		Rented, council	30.8	25.9
		Rented, private	16.5	18.3
		Rent free	2.8	2.1
		N.A.	0.6	0.7
			100.0	100.0
4. Household equipment		Washing machine	59.2	47.2
		Refrigerator	78.9	88.5
		Television	95.8	98.1
		Telephone	44.3	49.2
		Car	36.5	32.5
5. Membership of Church Organisation		Men	8.0	8.4
		Women	16.3	13.3

APPENDIX A

Comparison of Age Concern 4-town survey with DHSS/Hunt
All-England survey (75 or over age-group)

			DHSS %	AC %
1. Marital status	Men:	Married	64.0	66.7
		Widowed	32.4	28.4
		Single	3.0	4.6
		Div/sep	0.6	0.2
			100.0	100.0
	Women:	Married	20.1	17.8
		Widowed	67.7	62.2
		Single	10.8	17.6
		Div/sep	1.4	2.4
			100.0	100.0
2. Household composition	Men:	Living alone	20.7	22.4
		Living with others	79.3	77.6
			100.0	100.0
	Women:	Living alone	47.6	59.5
		Living with others	53.4	40.5
			100.0	100.0
3. Tenure		Own outright	43.9	47.6
		Own, mortgage	1.4	3.3
		Rented, council	31.4	23.9
		Rented, private	18.6	21.9
		Rent free	3.7	2.1
		N.A.	1.0	1.3
			100.0	100.0
4. Household equipment		Washing machine	40.0	33.1
		Refrigerator	65.7	80.6
		Television	83.9	96.3
		Telephone	44.5	53.2
		Car	23.7	15.4
5. Membership of Church Organisation	Men		7.6	8.2
	Women		15.1	16.0

Age Concern England is a registered charity founded in 1940 to promote the welfare of elderly people. Today it acts as the headquarters for over 1,300 local groups who work with volunteers to provide a wide range of community services including day centres, lunch clubs, visiting for the lonely as well as transport and many other schemes. Nationally it also brings together some 70 major organisations serving or representing the elderly.

Age Concern England provides a comprehensive information service and produces an extensive list of publications. Support for local Age Concern organisations is given by a team of Field Officers and there is also a Training Department and a Research Unit. Age Concern England takes an active part in policy formulation by advising the Government on legislation affecting the elderly and by campaigning on their behalf.

Age Concern England is dependent on public support for the continuation of its work for the care of the elderly. Donations and legacies are always urgently needed.

AGE CONCERN

National Old People's Welfare Council
Bernard Sunley House 60 Pitcairn Road Mitcham Surrey

RESEARCH ADVISORY GROUP MEMBERS

Mark Abrams	Research Unit Director
Mr Jonathan Barker	Middlesex Polytechnic
Mr Paul Brearley	University College of North Wales
Dr Bill Bytheway	University College of Swansea
Dr Sheila Chown	Bedford College, University of London
Professor Michael Fogarty	Policy Studies Institute
Mrs Katia Gilhome-Herbst	The Polytechnic of North London
Professor Bernard Isaacs	University of Birmingham
Mr Malcolm Johnson	Personal Social Services Council
(Chairman)	
Mr Kenneth Wright	University of York

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